



**PEER SUPPORTED REVIEW  
OF  
LEARNING, TEACHING  
AND  
ASSESSMENT**

**Staff Guide 2020-21**

[Adapted from resources produced by FDTL5 Project: ELATE]

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development/peer-supported-review-psr>

## CONTEXT

In the autumn 2006 Senate approved the Peer Supported Review (PSR) approach to the ongoing enhancement of individual's learning and teaching practice.

Peer Supported Review (PSR) of learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) is an integral part of the professional development of staff within a culture of reflective practice. The original scheme adopted by Ulster University was developed and trialled at Sheffield Hallam University in 2002/3 and 2003/4 and received project funding under the HEFCE Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning initiative (FDTL round 5) for the project ELATE. Feedback from the project trials indicated that the process is non-threatening and helps to enhance LTA professional practice, particularly at the module level.

PSR has now been running within the University for a number of years with significant numbers of staff utilising the process to explore and embed enhancements in their learning and teaching practice. This approach to practice enhancement aligns to the current Learning and Teaching Strategy enabling aim *"To provide a supportive environment, in which innovative approaches to learning, teaching and leadership are encouraged, recognised, valued and rewarded, for all staff and students in the University"*<sup>1</sup>.

The ethos of PSR also supports the drive to encourage the development of communities of practice, in order to promote scholarly dialogue and encourage and facilitate the sharing of effective practice between and within subjects and departments.

Nationally it has now been communicated that the collection of academic staff teaching qualifications by HESA will be published at institutional level in 2015<sup>2</sup>. HEFCE states its rationale for this as:

"HEFCE wishes to promote enhancement in learning and teaching practice. Gaining an academic qualification in teaching at higher education level, and a commitment to continuing professional development, can support enhancement in teaching practice and the learner's experience"

For many staff the means to professional qualification and recognition will be through achieving HEA fellowship aligned to the UKPSF<sup>3</sup> - a key element of fellowship is the ability to evidence your ongoing commitment to CPD in learning and teaching. PSR provides a process for demonstrating this commitment to CPD aligned to the UKPSF. This version of the Handbook for PSR makes this linkage more explicit. (For further information see <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/pds/> )

### PSR Implementation and Co-ordination

CHERP are responsible for co-ordinating PSR, providing training and support for staff and evaluating the process. The key contact within CHERP is Dr Amanda Platt, [aj.platt@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:aj.platt@ulster.ac.uk)

## 1. PRINCIPLES OF THE REFRESHED PSR SYSTEM

A refreshed PSR process was first implemented during academic year 2017/18 and this new approach will continue for 2020/21. The rejuvenated process is designed to more effectively encourage, support and enable staff to document, disseminate and embed strategically aligned enhancements in learning and teaching practice. The revised process advocates that enhancement activities are guided by three broad principles, namely:

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/teaching\\_and\\_learning\\_strategy/](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/teaching_and_learning_strategy/)

<sup>2</sup> <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/20630/1/The%20publication%20of%20HESA%20data%20on%20academic%20teaching%20qualifications.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf>

- **STRATEGIC ENHANCEMENT:** The identification of an area of learning facilitation or assessment that would benefit from an in-depth review and evaluation should be informed by, and strategically aligned with, local level action plans (e.g. Faculty and School Action Plans) which are aligned with SP 5&50. These strategically focused enhancement activities should also align with UKPSF areas of activity.

The L&T Strategy (2018/19-23/24) with its seven thematic areas of priority will inform and provide further strategic guidance for staff enhancement activities.

This academic year our attention and efforts have been dominated by adjustments to practice in response to the ongoing challenge of the COVID-19 context. With that in mind, colleagues are encouraged to utilise the PSR process to document and share the outcomes of initiatives related to the following aspects of practice:

- Transition to online delivery and/or assessment;
  - Assessment reform;
  - Student engagement and retention;
  - Student representation and the efficacy of the student voice.
- **COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY:** PSR should be a collaborative, team-driven process. Ideally, where possible enhancement activities should engage entire course teams to afford the opportunity to enhance and develop consistency in practice, and therefore student experience, across and within programme modules;
  - **DISSEMINATION FOR ACTION AND EMBEDDING IN PRACTICE:** In seeking to support the achievement of strategic objectives and targets around L&T, the dissemination of effective and innovative enhancements should actively encourage the adoption and anchoring of effective practices in the local setting.

At an institutional level, CHERP will utilise PSR submissions to identify exemplars of effective practice and may invite associated teams to share their practice with colleagues via institutional best practice events, activities and website.

## **2. BENEFITS OF ENGAGING WITH THE PSR PROCESS**

Staff engagement with PSR has the following benefits:

- improvement of professional practice and the student learning experience;
- dissemination and greater awareness of good practice at school, faculty and institutional level
- development of peer learning communities;
- evidence of individual and institutional engagement in LTA enhancement and professional development;
- evidence of engagement with the enhancement of L&T and commitment to professional development, aligned to the UKPSF, in support of applications for recognition, promotion and good standing (see Section 5 and Appendix 2).

## **3. AN OUTLINE OF THE PSR PROCESS & TIMELINE**

This section provides an outline of the process and an indicative timeline. As in previous rounds of PSR, the **timeline assumes that the review process extends over a full academic year.**

Key Stage	Indicative Timeline
<p><b>1. Identification of the enhancement activity.</b> As a starting point, it is advised that teams refer to school and faculty actions plans to assist them in identifying the broad strategically aligned focus for the enhancement activity. Feedback such as module evaluations and student questionnaires may then be used to refine the focus.</p> <p>Appendix 2 offers a UKPSF aligned non-exhaustive list that may help generate specific ideas for the enhancement activity.</p>	October 2020 – February 2021
<p><b>2. Planning for the review process</b> should be developed by the team. The focus of the review will determine to a large extent the way in which the process is undertaken. There is no requirement to engage in peer observation of teaching though that may be appropriate in some cases.</p>	October 2020 – February 2021
<p><b>3. The review and evaluation</b> process will be undertaken according to the plan agreed at stage 2. Elements of the process may occur at any time between October and June depending on the semester(s) in which the module(s) take place and the specific focus.</p>	October 2020 to June 2021, as appropriate
<p><b>4. Reporting procedure</b></p> <p>Teams will be expected to provide a report on the focus and main outcomes of the process. All team members, who have actively participated, should be listed in the report.</p> <p>This information will be collated to generate an institution-wide summary report*. Individual PSR school reports will also be compiled recording staff engagement and enhancement activities and will be sent to school and faculty leadership teams for review and dissemination.</p> <p><b>PSR reports must be submitted via the electronic form on the <a href="#">CHERP website</a>. Reports can be submitted from 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>th</sup> July 2021.</b></p> <p>With reference to Appendix 1, the reporting template has been designed to facilitate and enhance opportunities for the dissemination of PSR activities.</p> <p><b>*Institutional PSR reports</b> will summarise engagement with PSR at a subject <b>NOT</b> individual level.</p>	<p>Online submission for reports open until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021</p> <p><b>Deadline for submissions: 31st July 2021</b></p>
<p><b>5. Dissemination</b></p> <p>School and faculty leadership will be encouraged to actively disseminate the outcomes of PSR and facilitate the embedding of effective practices, at school/ faculty level.</p> <p>At an institutional level, CHERP will utilise PSR submissions to identify exemplars of effective practice and may invite associated teams to share their practice with colleagues via institutional best practice events and activities.</p> <p>Dissemination of the outcomes of the process will be discretionary.</p>	September 2021 onwards

<p><b>6. Continuing professional development (CPD)</b></p> <p>The cycle will be repeated at the beginning of each academic year, either with a further iteration of the same enhancement activity or a new one.</p> <p>Evidence from PSR may be beneficial when developing applications for reward and recognition schemes and promotion. It may also form a useful basis for evidencing your commitment to CPD in HEA fellowship applications and in maintaining your good standing as a HEA fellow <a href="https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf/good-standing">https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf/good-standing</a></p>	<p>Each academic year</p>
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#### 4. GUIDANCE ON HOW TO UNDERTAKE THE PROCESS

##### THE FOCUS OF THE REVIEW

Ulster’s Strategic Plan, 5&50, clearly states that teaching is a priority for the institution with teaching excellence and the student experience as areas of focus. *Faculty action plans directly align with SP 5&50 and provide staff with an overview of faculty specific teaching priority objectives. As a first step, these plans should be consulted in order to identify a broad area of enhancement activity. This overall strategic alignment affords more relevant and focused enhancement activities that can directly contribute to, and provide documented evidence in support of, the achievement of faculty teaching objectives.*

Once the broad strategic focus is established, the enhancement activity can be concentrated on a more specific aspect of learning facilitation or assessment. Additional module/ course specific feedback (e.g. arising from module evaluations and/or student questionnaires) may be used to refine the nature of the enhancement activity.

Appendix 2 offers a non-exhaustive list designed to help generate specific ideas for your enhancement activity. The list is grouped under areas of learning, teaching and assessment reflecting those within the UKPSF for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE (<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>). By engaging with PSR you are showing evidence of engagement with the UKPSF area of activity - A5: Engage in CPD in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogies, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices. These headings have been used as indicative categories within the reporting template for PSR.

For those of you seeking recognition against the UKPSF (e.g. through the Ulster Professional Development and Recognition Scheme (<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/pds/> ) focussing your PSR activity may help you to generate evidence of engagement and effective practice.

##### THE TEAM

- This process gives module/ course teams an opportunity to collaboratively improve professional practice within and across programmes.
- The refreshed Peer Supported Review process is team-driven with colleagues supporting, NOT assessing, each other.
- All team members should be clear about their role in the process. It may be useful to establish expectations for all members of the team by devising a timeline of team activities and key dates at the outset of the process.

## INVOLVING STUDENTS

Though it is not required, it is suggested that involving students might add value to the evaluation of enhancement activities. For example, a student perspective might possibly be helpful where a review focuses upon:

- An evaluation of particular learning materials or processes
- Enhancing the quality of feedback to students
- The impact of formative assessment

There are many ways that students might assist with a review process including:

- Whole group involvement on a one-off or periodic basis
- The use of small focus groups

### Appendix 1: Key sections in the PSR reporting template

Team members
School(s)/ Department(s)
Module/ Course
Faculty Action Plan Objective(s) – detail alignment with strategic objectives
UKPSF Area(s) of Activity – detail alignment with UKPSF
Title of Project
Overview
Description of enhancement activity
Context – strategic rationale, underpinning pedagogy and aims/ objectives
Design – methodological approach
Evaluation of impact/ outcomes (positive or not) on learning and teaching
Team reflective commentary - what worked well and challenges to be overcome
Transferability – has the activity produced anything of interest to colleagues
References
Keywords
Dissemination – willingness to share the outcomes at internal/ external events

## Appendix 2: UKPSF aligned activities

<b>Design &amp; plan learning activities and/or programmes of study (A1)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a problem-based learning approach to learning</li> <li>Embedding personal development planning within the curriculum</li> <li>Promoting creativity</li> <li>Developing a new module/ course</li> <li>Involve students in course/ module development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedding employability within the curriculum</li> <li>Promoting internationalisation within the curriculum</li> <li>Developing more active learning strategies</li> <li>Promoting inter-professional learning</li> </ul>
<b>Teach and/or support learning (A2)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching more efficiently without reducing the quality of learning</li> <li>Shifting the balance away from didactic styles of delivery</li> <li>Developing more varied approaches to the delivery of material</li> <li>Making the most of the inputs from external speakers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appraising the teaching strategy for a particular aspect of a module</li> <li>Testing out strategies for effective distance learning</li> <li>Developing effective discipline specific approaches</li> </ul>
<b>Assess &amp; give feedback to learners (A3)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application of the Ulster Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning</li> <li>Developing peer-marked formative assessment instruments to promote learning</li> <li>Making effective use of formative assessment</li> <li>Linking feedback more effectively to assessment criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The development of examination instruments that test deep learning and which are less dependent on short term memory</li> <li>The development of on-line assessment instruments</li> <li>Peer marking of formative assessments</li> <li>Readability and issues of clarity in assessment instruments</li> </ul>
<b>Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support &amp; guidance (A4)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting first year students effectively</li> <li>Managing learning with large groups of students</li> <li>Incorporating a Blackboard Learn element to support learning</li> <li>Using Blackboard Learn interactively</li> <li>Implementing on-line learning</li> <li>Developing more flexible courses and modules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a more effective interface between learning support staff e.g. technical, library, careers and academic staff</li> <li>Developing effective student support strategies for more disparate student populations e.g. mature, international, disabled, online, part-time</li> <li>Developing your studies advisor skills</li> <li>Developing effective approaches to student induction</li> </ul>
<b>Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices (A5)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing your pedagogy through incorporation of research based approaches</li> <li>Developing your understanding of the research-teaching nexus</li> <li>Linking research to teaching and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking an idea from a CPD event and trialling it within your own practice</li> <li>Undertaking an action research project</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership of Learning and Teaching (D3.7)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing your course management skills</li> <li>Enhancing your leadership of L&amp;T skills</li> <li>Leading a course revalidation/ evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentoring new staff</li> <li>Dissemination of effective practice</li> <li>Influencing the practice of others</li> </ul>

