PEER SUPPORTED REVIEW
OF
LEARNING, TEACHING
AND
ASSESSMENT

Staff Guide 2016-17

[Adapted from resources produced by FDTL5 Project: ELATE]

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development/peer-supported-review-psr
In the autumn 2006 Senate approved the following Peer Supported Review (PSR) approach to the ongoing enhancement of individual’s learning and teaching practice.

Senate Extract:

1. Retain the current arrangements for the direct observation of teaching during a new member of staff’s probationary period and within the PgCHEP.

2. Introduces a new model for staff with a teaching and learning role. It is recommended that the University moves to a peer-supported review model where the key difference is that it extends the scope of the focus of the review from traditional ‘teaching’ to the wider range of teaching and learning activities that impact on the student experience. This should result in clear enhancements being made to the student experience.”

3. 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”1. 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 20152. 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 UKPSF3 - a key element of fellowship is the ability to evidence your ongoing commitment to CPD in learning and teaching. (for further information see http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/pds/)

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.

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

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE SYSTEM

1 http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/teaching_and_learning_strategy/
2 http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/20630/1/The%20publication%20of%20HESA%20data%20on%20academic%20teaching%20qualifications.pdf
3 https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf
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. This 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 new process is non-threatening and helps to enhance LTA professional practice, particularly at the module level.

2.0 PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW SYSTEM

PSR of LTA is a reviewee-driven process designed to provide you with an opportunity to develop your professional practice, individually or as a member of a team*, with the help of a supportive colleague(s). It is important that you commit to the process by thoroughly reviewing your professional practice at the end of each academic year in order to identify an area that would benefit from an in-depth review and evaluation. It is important that you:

- are clear about the way in which you wish your colleague/team to support you;
- design an appropriate review method in consultation with your supportive colleague/team;
- are prepared to share concerns about aspects of your professional practice with your supportive colleague/team.

There are no barriers in terms of who is able to act as a supportive colleague*. Inexperienced teachers can often bring new and valued insights to the review process and all supportive colleagues can expect to learn from their involvement in the process. In order that they contribute positively to the process it is important that supportive colleagues appreciate that they:

- are supporting not assessing the reviewee;
- allow the reviewee to lead in defining the review methodology and that they suggest rather than assert what will or will not work;
- remember that PSR of LTA is not an exercise in trying to get a reviewee to adopt the supporting colleague’s professional attitudes and behaviours.

*If you are working as part of a team the supportive colleague(s) may be the other team members. As such, team submissions are only required to specify a particular supportive colleague(s) where they have not been a member of the team.

Involving Students

Though it is not in any sense required, it is suggested that involving students might add value to some review processes. A student perspective might possibly be helpful as part of reviews focusing on new learning materials, formative or summative assessment and feedback.

3.0 BENEFITS OF PSR

Staff engagement with PSR has the following benefits:

- improvement of 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 your commitment to professional development aligned to the UKPSF.
4.0 AN OUTLINE OF THE PSR PROCESS

This section describes the operation of the process though it should be emphasised that the details and suggested timescales could be varied to accommodate particular circumstances. An outline of the process including a suggested timeline is shown below. The suggested timeline assumes that the review process extends over a full academic year.

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<th>Key Stage</th>
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<td>Identifying the focus for the review and if you plan to work as an individual or in a team</td>
<td>September - October</td>
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<td>Selecting the supporting colleague (this may be other members of your team if you are working in one)</td>
<td>September - October</td>
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<td>Planning the review process</td>
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<td>Undertaking the review</td>
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<td>Reporting procedure</td>
<td>Call opens: 5th January 2017 Deadline: July 31st 2017 PSR reports must be submitted via the electronic form on the CHERP website. (<a href="https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PSR2015-16">https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PSR2015-16</a>)</td>
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<td>Continuing professional development</td>
<td>The cycle will then be repeated in each subsequent academic year either continuing with the same review focus or starting a new one.</td>
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STAGE 1 Identifying the Focus for the Review

Between the end of one session and beginning of the next, you should identify an aspect of your professional practice that you wish to review. It is advised that colleagues use feedback such as module evaluations, student questionnaires or course, School and Faculty priorities in order to assist them in identifying a focus for the forthcoming review – see section 5 for further guidance. The focus for a review might centre on a particular module (e.g. the evaluation of student responses to some new action learning activities) or it might relate more generally to the way in which a teacher organises or supports student learning (e.g. effective use of questioning to engage students in seminar discussions).

STAGE 2 Selecting the Supporting Colleague

Once the focus for the review is established, you should identify a supporting colleague. If you are working on a team project this may be the other team members. The expectation is that you will choose a colleague with whom you can work effectively and who will be able to contribute positively to the process. You might wish to consider selecting a colleague on the basis that they:

- have particular expertise (Blackboard Learn, e-learning, on-line assessment, active learning, problem-based learning etc.),
- provide a new or valued perspective (as in the case of new staff who have just completed the PgCHEP or experienced staff who are known to be effective in some aspect of LTA),
- are a member of your teaching team (but not the module leader),
- are a known and trusted colleague.
Practicalities may make it necessary to suggest that a member of staff will support no more than two colleagues.

*If you are working as part of a team the supportive colleague(s) may be the other team members. As such, team submissions are only required to specify a particular supportive colleague(s) where they have not been a member of the team.

**STAGE 3 Detailed Planning**

The review method will be developed by you with assistance from your supporting colleague as appropriate.

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.

At this stage there will no longer be a formal reporting requirement, however, you may wish to keep your own records of your planned work.

**STAGE 4 The Review**

The review process will be undertaken according to the strategy agreed at stage 3 (above). Elements of the process may occur at any time between October and June depending on the semester(s) in which the module takes place and its specific focus.

You need to take responsibility for ensuring that the planned activities actually take place. Experience has shown that, even where colleagues are fully committed to the process, slippage can occur due to pressure of work or other ‘just causes’.

**STAGE 5 Reporting Procedures**

Reporting procedures are deliberately kept to a minimum.

At the end of the academic session you will be expected to provide a report on the main outcomes of the process and to submit this via the electronic form available at [https://www.ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development/peer-supported-review-psr](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development/peer-supported-review-psr). To facilitate and enhance opportunities for the dissemination of PSR activities within and across schools and faculties, the PSR report structure has been aligned with the template for submissions to the CHERP online resource called SupporTaL ([http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/supportal.html](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/supportal.html)).

If you have worked on a team project all team members should be listed in Section 1 of the report. This information will be archived in the form of a spreadsheet and will be sent to Schools/ Departments and Faculties for use in preparing summary reports for an annual report to ADEC. Faculties will be expected to utilise an annual process to review subject-level information summarising levels of involvement with PSR, the focus of the review activity and an overview of the outcomes of the review activity. The annual report will discuss engagement with PSR at a subject NOT individual level therefore maintaining confidentiality of staff.

Any further reporting of the outcomes of the process will be entirely at your discretion. You may wish to disseminate outcomes that you think will be of interest to particular groups within your faculty, the University (e.g. Centre for Higher Education Research & Practice and the online learning and teaching resource SupporTaL) or externally (e.g. HE Academy). Likewise you may wish to discuss the outcomes with your line manager at appraisal.
STAGE 6 Continuing Professional Development

You are encouraged to discuss any professional development needs arising from your peer supported review process with your line manager at your next appraisal meeting. Evidence from PSR may be beneficial when developing applications for reward and recognition schemes. 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 https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf/good-standing

5.0 SOME ADVICE ON HOW TO UNDERTAKE THE PROCESS

5.1 THE FOCUS OF A REVIEW

The new Ulster Learning and Teaching Strategy http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/teaching_and_learning_strategy/ has as its 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”.

PSR activity can be used effectively to engage with this. A review can be focused on any aspect of learning facilitation or assessment. As the new Learning and Teaching Strategy comes into effect you may wish to explore how your practice aligns to one or more of the key strategic aims:

- To provide appropriate learning opportunities which are flexible, responsive to, and inclusive of, the needs of students, professions, industry and the wider community.
- To provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility.
- To enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience.

The following non-exhaustive list is designed to help generate ideas for your review. The list is grouped under a number of areas of learning, teaching and assessment reflecting those within the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (these linkages are shown in brackets and correlate to areas of activity and descriptor criteria, for more information see http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf ). These headings have been used as indicative categories within the reporting forms for PSR. By undertaking 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.

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.
### Design & plan learning activities and/or programmes of study (A1)

- Establishing a problem-based learning approach to learning
- Embedding personal development planning within the curriculum
- Promoting creativity
- Embedding employability within the curriculum
- Promoting internationalisation within the curriculum
- Developing more active learning strategies
- Promoting inter-professional learning
- Developing a new module/course
- Involve students in course/module development

### Teach and/or support learning (A2)

- Teaching more efficiently without reducing the quality of learning
- Shifting the balance away from didactic styles of delivery
- Developing more varied approaches to the delivery of material
- Making the most of the inputs from external speakers
- Appraising the teaching strategy for a particular aspect of a module
- Testing out strategies for effective distance learning
- Developing effective discipline specific approaches

### Assess & give feedback to learners (A3)

- Application of the Ulster Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning
- Developing peer-marked formative assessment instruments to promote learning
- Making effective use of formative assessment
- Linking feedback more effectively to assessment criteria
- The development of examination instruments that test deep learning and which are less dependent on short term memory
- The development of on-line assessment instruments
- Peer marking of formative assessments
- Readability and issues of clarity in assessment instruments

### Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support & guidance (A4)

- Supporting first year students effectively
- Managing learning with large groups of students
- Incorporating a Blackboard Learn element to support learning
- Using Blackboard Learn interactively
- Implementing on-line learning
- Developing more flexible courses and modules
- Developing a more effective interface between learning support staff e.g. technical, library, careers and academic staff
- Developing effective student support strategies for more disparate student populations e.g. mature, international, disabled, online, part-time
- Developing your studies advisor skills
- Developing effective approaches to student induction

### Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices (A5)
Informing your pedagogy through incorporation of research based approaches
Developing your understanding of the research-teaching nexus
Linking research to teaching and learning
Taking an idea from a CPD event and trialling it within your own practice
Undertaking an action research project

Leadership of Learning and Teaching (D3.7)

- Developing your course management skills
- Enhancing your leadership of L&T skills
- Leading a course revalidation/ evaluation
- Mentoring new staff
- Dissemination of effective practice
- Influencing the practice of others

5.2 ADVICE TO THE REVIEWEE

- This process gives reviewees an opportunity to improve with the help of a supportive colleague/ team.
- Peer supported review is a reviewee-driven process: your colleague is supporting not assessing.
- Even experienced teachers can improve their professional practice with the help of a supportive colleague/ team.
- Be clear about the way in which you want your colleague/ team to support you.
- Set up a diary of events so that your supporting colleague/ team knows exactly what is expected of them.
- Don't be afraid to share your concerns about aspects of your teaching with your supporting colleague/ team. Remember we've all got something to learn given the pace of technological developments and the increasingly diverse range of students whose learning we are here to support.

5.3 ADVICE TO THE SUPPORTING COLLEAGUE

- You can still provide valuable support even if you are an inexperienced teacher.
- Expect to learn from your involvement as a supporting colleague even if you are reviewing an inexperienced colleague. Teacher educators, inspectors and others regularly report how much they learn from observing others.
- If you are asked to assist with the planning of a peer-supported review, allow the reviewee to lead. Don't be insistent about what will work and what won't. Remember that this is a reviewee-driven process.
- Please remember that this is not an exercise in trying to get someone else to do things the way you do them.

5.4 INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE REVIEW PROCESS

Though it is not in any sense required, it is suggested that involving students might add value to some review processes. 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
- Trialling new learning strategies
- The impact of formative assessment
There is a variety of ways in which students might assist with a review process including:

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

Whether or not students are involved in the review process is entirely up to the reviewee.