

University of Northampton Code of Practice – Peer and Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching

1.1 Introduction

This code sets out the University of Northampton scheme for Peer and Collaborative Observation and reflects the University's commitment to assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience and to providing developmental opportunities for teaching enhancement; the Peer and Collaborative Observation of Learning and Teaching process is one element.

Peer and Collaborative Observation of Learning and Teaching is part of the University's CPD Framework for staff involved in teaching and supporting learning, C@N-DO. The focus of collaborative observation activities within the scheme is developmental enhancement. The underpinning principle is that both the person observing, (the observer) and the person being observed (the observee) can benefit from the process and the aim is to provide opportunities for staff to collaborate in reflection, discussion and further development of their professional practice.

1.2 Scope

This code applies to all University staff undertaking teaching and learning support in any form, including staff engaged in providing staff development activities for colleagues. The principles should be applied appropriately given the nature and extent of each activity.

The code applies to the full range of activities involved in teaching and supporting learning at all levels, for example:

- Observation of classroom teaching or other development activity such as staff training or practical demonstration with students
- Observation of online teaching, staff development and/or learner support, including within distance learning
- Co-teaching activity, where more than one member of staff has been involved in the planning and delivery of teaching and learning activity

- Activity which involves an advisory role, which may include in-house staff mentor activity or 'professional tutor' roles where liaison with other external professionals is required e.g. health/education
- Observation of other activity related to teaching – preparation / assessment / feedback / moderation activity

1.3 Principles

1.3.1. Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching is a peer based, collaborative, non-judgmental scheme designed to provide opportunities for participants to enhance the learning experience of their students and to reflect on and develop aspects of their own professional practice. The scheme recognises that all participants, whether observing or being observed, benefit from the process.

1.3.2. The scope of the code includes the full range of activities involved in teaching and supporting learning. Therefore, it is expected that observation will not be limited to teaching in the classroom but may also embrace online activities, supervision, field work, tutorial groups, written feedback to students and clarity of assessment tasks. Staff are encouraged to think creatively about how 'observation' may be expanded to facilitate peer support for the enhancement of the full range of teaching activities.

1.3.3. In all instances it is recognised that formal observation of teaching is a valuable strategy to meet the enhancement objectives listed earlier. There should also be a recognition that observing is not a 'neutral process' and some formal discussion of observation goals, context, teaching aims, teaching and observation methods and observer objectivity is required, both before and after the actual observation.

- a) For observation of online activity, discussion of observation goals and context should include clear guidance advising the online observer where to look e.g. which forum or wiki.
- b) Where observation of assessment occurs within this scheme, the related discussion should be comprehensive and include such processes as second marking and moderation.
- c) The process should involve pairs or groups of up to four members, which may be formed either within or beyond departmental and disciplinary boundaries.

1.3.4. External perspectives are strongly encouraged in order to facilitate the exchange of effective practice, broaden awareness and understanding of different approaches to learning and teaching and enable mutual exploration of teaching and learning issues which transcend School and disciplinary boundaries. Examples may include cross-School and cross-disciplinary observations, work- or

practice-based activity, observations carried out by an observer who may be external to the institution.

1.3.5. Ethical practice requires that the rights of both staff and students are respected in any observation activity; observer and observee should negotiate the context of observation as part of the preparatory discussion, and students should be informed when observation is taking place; with respect to 1:1 teaching (for example tutorials), consent of students must be sought in advance.

1.3.6. All those whose annual teaching or supporting learning load exceeds 20 contact hours per year are expected to participate in the scheme: as part of their development towards recognition or maintenance of good standing as Fellows of the HEA and learning gained from participation will be noted as part of the annual PDR process: The expectations are that:

- each full-time member of staff will participate in the scheme, as observer or observee, a minimum of once in each academic year
- each part-time member of staff will participate in the scheme in accordance with a schedule agreed with their head of department/line manager and which reflects the extent of their teaching commitment
- all staff have their practice observed no less than once in every two years.

1.4 Responsibilities

1.4.1. The University's Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process involves three stages which should be followed: Preparation for Observation, Observation and Discussion and Action Planning.

1.4.2. Each participating member of staff is responsible for identifying the pair or group they will work with. In planning their engagement with the scheme staff are expected to ensure that they engage with different people in forming their peer support pairs /groups in consecutive years, in order to maximise the scope for development and enhancement through a breadth of the shared experience. Working in a pair or group over a period of two years may provide staff with the opportunity to engage in a supported cycle of reflection, action and evaluation, however, staff are expected to work in different pairs/ groups every two years.

1.4.3. The Institute for Learning and Teaching is responsible for ensuring through the CPD Scheme C@N-DO that appropriate staff development opportunities are available to ensure that staff can gain maximum benefit from engagement with the Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching scheme. This will support engagement both as observers and observees.

1.4.4. Each participating member of staff is responsible for including a record of learning and development gained through engagement in the Collaborative

Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process within their annual PDR submission.

1.4.5. The line manager is responsible for ensuring through the PDR process that eligible members of staff engage with the Code of Practice.

1.5 Process

1.5.1. The University's Peer and Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process involves three stages which should be followed: Preparation for Observation, Observation and Discussion and Action Planning.

1.5.2. Pro-forma have been provided to facilitate planning and reflection during the Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process. These pro-forma are available via Annexe 1. Participants should complete the pro-forma and may wish to keep them for their own records as part of their professional development.

1.5.3. In preparing for the observation, it must be ensured that:

- both observers and observees have familiarised themselves with the principles and conduct of observation from this code of practice
- observees have identified and explained the main issues for observation and feedback, the teaching aims and methods
- both observers and observees have agreed the context to be observed and form of feedback to be used
- observers and observees have agreed how the observer's presence in the session will be explained to students
- observers and observees have arranged a time and place for as soon as possible after the observation for Discussion and Action Planning.

1.5.4. During the observation it must be ensured that:

- The observation and note-taking or recording should be driven by the agenda identified as part of the planning process
- Observers should conduct the observation as agreed, with respect to the observee and students, be unobtrusive, and not intervene in the session unless invited to do so by the observee

1.5.5. Post-Observation Discussion and Action Planning should include:

- Discussions following observation that cover the agenda agreed at the planning stage.
- Beginning with a self-evaluation of the session by the observee unless s/he chooses otherwise
- Observer comments made in the spirit of an exchange between equals

- Both observer's and observee's discussion of what each has learned from the process and identifying any areas for action or to be noted as Elements Worthy of Dissemination.
- Discussions that establish the ownership and use to be made of records and outcomes from the process, considering opportunities for dissemination of good practice and use of the documents as valuable resources for career development, such as in relation to HEA Fellowship within the CPD Scheme C@N-DO, and to inform PDR discussions.

1.5.6. Confirmation of Process and Elements Worthy of Good Practice:

Each participating member of staff is responsible for including a record of learning and development gained through engagement in the Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process within their annual PDR submission.

APPENDIX 1 – Proforma for use within the C@N-DO Peer-to-Peer Observation amongst Teaching and Learning Support Staff

C@N-DO Peer-to-Peer Observation is a three-stage developmental process designed to help you to learn with and from fellow professionals and to develop and enhance your practice. Participants can choose to focus on a variety of aspects of their practice: peer observation of teaching online or in the classroom (A2, K4), provision of feedback on assessment (A3), support for individual student needs (V1, V2), etc.

C@N-DO Peer-to-Peer Observation can be undertaken online as well as in the classroom. Forms are provided to guide each stage of the process:

- Preparation for Observation
 - Observation
 - Discussion and action planning.
- (These three reflect the steps typically known as Pre-Observation, Observation & Post-Observation.)

Please ensure that students know that the observation is taking place, as part of staff professional development & to enhance their learning experience.

Stage 1: Preparation for Observation

Within effective Peer-to-Peer observation, preparation is vital - to help clarify the learning goals for the process & to ensure the observer has key information to understand what they observe.

1. Think about the following questions:

- Who are the students you work with? How diverse are they as a group? What are their strengths as learners? What particular needs do they bring? How do you celebrate their diversity within your teaching? How do you meet their needs?
- What aspects of student learning would be most interesting for you to explore? Would you like to understand better why something works well or why something is not working successfully?
- Is there an aspect of your teaching / support / assessment practice (face-to-face or online) which you would like to change or develop?
- What are your goals in your subject teaching / support work? Are they being achieved?

¹Questions adapted from Gosling and O'Connor 2006

2. Please take your own notes.

3. Select 3-4 issues which you would like to explore as the focus for Peer Observation.

Now, complete the form below ready for the observer:

- Complete all the sections shaded in grey on the next page.
- The white areas are for the observer to complete.
- Expand boxes as necessary.

Observation Details:	
Who will observe and be observed?	
Practitioner's name:	Faculty/ Department:
Observer's name:	Faculty/ Department:
Observation Agenda	
Context observed (e.g. lecture, seminar, online discussion, lab)	
Issues selected as observation focus:	
ObserverE choice of focus:	
1.	
2.	
ObserverR choice of focus:	
1.	
2.	
What will the observer need to know about the context they will observe?	
Course / Module – e.g. Title, Level and any other key information:	
Topic of the session/element of the course to be observed. And where does this fit into the overall learning / teaching process on the module?	
Teaching aims / focus:	
The group: Size, nature and diversity of the group? What are their strengths + their needs?	
Material: What handbooks and/or learning/teaching material will you provide for the observer?	

If the observation is to take place online, which elements of the NILE site (or other tool) will the observer need to look at? e.g. a particular forum? part of the wiki? Activity instructions?

Stage 2: Observation

Write the issues selected as the observation 'agenda' in the area shaded in grey on this page; the white areas are for observer comments.

Observation Agenda	
Aspects of practice agreed as observation focus:	Observer Thoughts / Comments (expand boxes as necessary)

Good practice:

You could use the following section to note any other general points arising from the review. You will have built a collaboration with your colleague that should result in benefit to both of you. In any observation there will be aspects or practices that worked well and less well. In your feedback, try to be empathetic without passing judgment on what you have noticed.
During the observation...

I noticed...
I thought....

I noticed...
I wondered...

I noticed...
I wanted to ask you...

Adapted from Scrivener, J. *Learning Teaching* Task 9, p.211

Discussion and action planning

We recommend that each observation should be followed by

- Written feedback from the Observer
- Discussion between the Practitioner and the Observer
- Written summaries of learning gained & future plans – suggested format below

Following this peer-to-peer observation process, I plan to:			
	Stop ...	Start ...	Continue ...
On the basis of my role as observee			
On the basis of my role as observer			
Overall insights and thoughts in relation to my professional practice & development ...			

Summary Sheet

Policy Title:	
Code of Practice: Peer and Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching	
Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies:	
All University staff undertaking teaching and learning support in any form, including staff engaged in providing staff development activities for colleagues.	
Owner and Department:	
Helen Scott (School of Education) and Shirley Bennett (ILT)	
Principal contact:	
Helen Scott	
Dissemination and implementation plan:	
Via SSECs and Learning and Teaching Co-Ordinator's meetings	
Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):	June 2015 SSEC
Date of Senate approval:	July 2015
Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:	September 2015
Proposed date of annual update:	September 2016
Date of last annual update:	Not known
Proposed date of full review:	September 2019
Date of last full review:	n/a
Version number and date:	2.0