



CENTRE FOR TEACHING, LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Developing Your Skills as a Peer Reviewer: Introductory Workshop

**Today's facilitators:** Isabeau Iqbal <[isabeau.iqbal@ubc.ca](mailto:isabeau.iqbal@ubc.ca)>, Educational Developer, and Jan Johnson <[janice.johnson@ubc.ca](mailto:janice.johnson@ubc.ca)>, Manager, Facilitation and Process Design

Designed by Alice Cassidy, former Associate Director for the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth (TAG), University of British Columbia and Janice Johnson, Manager, Facilitation and Process Design, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology <[janice.johnson@ubc.ca](mailto:janice.johnson@ubc.ca)>. The materials in this handout are part of a facilitated workshop and are not meant as a stand-alone document. If you would like such a workshop led for your group, contact Jan Johnson.



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We have designed the workshop to provide opportunities to practice the kinds of things you will be doing as a peer reviewer in this program. Below is a snapshot of the agenda for our 4-hour workshop.

- Welcome and Introductions
- Goals and Process Overview
- Conducting Pre- and Post-observation meetings
- Two kinds of Guided Practice Sessions
- Tips for Peer Reviewers
- Closing

The learning objectives for our 4-hour workshop are that, by the end of the session, you will be able to:

- Describe the Peer Review (PR) process
- Provide constructive feedback for the person you are reviewing
- Conduct appropriate Pre- and Post-observation interviews for a peer review process
- Respond to various PR situations
- Write a relevant and concise report to be discussed in the Post-observation meeting



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## Process Checklist for Formative Peer Review Program Participants

The Peer Review process described here is intended primarily as a form of formative (and developmental) feedback. Some units at UBC use or have adapted the process described in this workshop for summative peer review. Other units use a variety of different processes to conduct peer review, for both formative and summative peer review. (Note: there is a project underway led by the Senior Advisor, Teaching and Learning, looking at the summative peer review of teaching process).

To request a peer review of your teaching, please go to <http://ctl.t.ubc.ca/programs/ubc-community/peer-review-of-teaching/> > to see a list of potential peer reviewers (list modified on an ongoing basis). Please email one of the reviewers. In your initial email, we suggest you include:

- Faculty and/or departmental affiliation
- Contact information
- Aspect(s) of your teaching you would like to have reviewed. These could include:
  - Classroom teaching (i.e. first year math class with more than 100 students, graduate seminar with 4 people, PBL session).
  - Student assignments
  - Student supervision
  - Teaching dossier and/or other teaching materials
  - Etc.
- If you would like the reviewer to conduct an observation of classroom teaching, please suggest some possible dates, or a time frame.
- Please be aware that, due to scheduling issues, it could take 4 to 6 weeks before you have your first meeting with your peer reviewer.
- Once you have heard back from the reviewer that she/he can conduct the peer review of teaching, talk or email with that person to set dates, times, and locations for:
  - The pre-observation meeting (at least one week prior to the observation)
  - The classroom observation(s), if applicable
  - The post-observation meeting (no later than one week after the classroom observation or meeting to review other teaching materials).



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- Prepare for the pre-observation meeting by reviewing and reflecting on the list of pre-observation questions (download PDF at <http://ctlit.ubc.ca/programs/ubc-community/peer-review-of-teaching/>)
- Meet with your peer reviewer for the pre-observation meeting.
- Teach your class while your peer reviewer observes.
- Reflect on what happened during the class and whether you feel you accomplished your objectives for the day. Record any issues or events that you would like to discuss with your peer reviewer.
- Meet with your peer reviewer for a post-observation meeting within 1 week after the classroom observation (download PDF at <http://tag.ubc.ca/programs/all/prt/program/process/>).
- Review, reflect on, and respond to (optional) the peer reviewers' feedback reports.
- Decide whether or not to submit the peer reviewer's report (along with your own) to your employment file and/or to include it in your teaching portfolio/dossier.



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## Active Listening Skills

*Used with permission. Adapted from: Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development. (1993). Facilitator development workshop: Handbook for participants. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.*

### **Listening**

To hear accurately what is being said and to understand the intended meaning without judging.

### **Benefits of Active Listening**

- Reduces friction and resolves conflicts productively
- Alerts you to opportunities to hear people who want your help
- Helps you develop insights into understanding people
- Cements relationships with colleagues, family and friends
- Removes blocks and filters that get in your way
- Ensures positive progress in planning
- Asserts your confidence, authority, and leadership better than words
- Tells you when to act and how
- Bridges gaps in understanding before they become crises
- Gives you greater flexibility and confidence
- Helps the person you are listening to feel that you are not trying to change him or her
- Helps the person you are listening to feel understood
- Keeps the communication channels open to explore other alternatives
- Helps the person you are listening to develop a clearer understanding of his/her issues

### **When to Use Active Listening**

- When you hear feelings
- When the person you are listening to says they have a problem
- When you are willing to take the time
- When you really want to help the person you are listening to
- When you trust that person to make his/her own decisions
- When the message from the person you are listening to is not direct and



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straightforward

### ***When not to use Active Listening***

- When you try to manipulate the person into thinking as you do
- When there is no genuine empathy
- When you don't have the time to deal with the issue, but if it is important, make time later
- When you have a big stake in the outcome so that you cannot remain objective

### ***Attending Behaviours***

To indicate your readiness and attentiveness both physically and psychologically, the listener should “attend” to the speaker at all times.

#### **Steps**

1. Arrange the environment to assist with effective communication
2. Face the person to whom you will be talking
3. Make eye contact to show attention and to help receive information (*This may or may not be appropriate, depending on the cultural background of the person who is listening*)
4. Lean slightly toward the person to indicate interest and receptiveness
5. Be aware of the person's 'comfort zone' - 1 to 1 ½ metres is comfortable for most people accustomed to Western society (*This will differ for individuals from other cultures*)
6. Show genuineness through facial expressions and other non-verbal behaviours

### ***Three Techniques for Active Listening: Reflecting, Paraphrasing, Probing***

#### **Reflecting**

- Repeating or mirroring the words of the other person to ensure that you heard correctly, and are not making assumptions about what the person said
- Forces the speaker to really think about what s/he is saying
- Speakers will often solve their own problems through discussion



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### *Example*

A friend comes to you and says in a very frustrated tone of voice, “This has been the worst day of my life.” You might respond with “The worst day of your life?” This forces the person to consider the meaning and impact of his/her words. S/he will likely respond with something like “Well, maybe not the worst, but it was frustrating.”

### **Paraphrasing**

- Condensing the other person’s statements into your own words to ensure understanding and to try to get the main point - the “meat” of the message.
- Repeat the statement in your own words so that the other person can let you know whether or not you have grasped the meaning.
- Use when the message from the other person is not very clear, or when you are more personally involved in the issue

### *Some communication leads to help with paraphrasing*

These phrases may be helpful when you trust your perceptions are accurate and the other person is receptive to your comments:

You feel ...  
 It seems to you ...  
 From where you stand ...  
 You think ...  
 What I hear you saying ...  
 In your experience ...  
 I’m picking up that you ...  
 You mean ...

These phrases may be helpful when you are having difficulty perceiving clearly or when the other person doesn’t seem to be responding to you:

Could it be that ...  
 Would you buy this idea ...  
 Is it possible that ...  
 Are you feeling ...  
 It seems that you ...



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...is that the way it is?  
 ...is that what you mean?  
 I guess that you're ...  
 I wonder if ...  
 I'm not sure if I'm with you, but ...  
 Could this be what's going on ...  
 Is there a chance you ...  
 Maybe I'm out to lunch, but ...  
 If you did more of ... you might find that ...

## Probing

- Use when you aren't understanding the other person, or when you want to help him/her come to a better understanding for him/herself
- Can involve using closed questions, open questions, or both

### *Closed Questions*

Have only one answer or one direction in which to answer  
 Tend to shut down or limit discussion  
 Force people to make decisions

### *Examples*

Are you mad at him?  
 Do you think he should be fired?  
 Which option should we take?  
 What did he do next?

### *Open Questions*

Have many possible answers or directions  
 Tend to open up discussion  
 Force people to think about other possibilities

### *Examples*

What does that feel like?  
 Can you tell me more about it?  
 Where would you like to begin?  
 Can you tell me what that means to you?



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How would you like things to be?  
What have you thought of?  
What options can you think of?  
How do you see things changing?  
What would you like to do about it?  
What's that like?  
What's most important for you?

## Summary

- Whichever technique you use, listen not only for the words, but also for the feeling tone behind them.
- To understand the message, you must try to understand the other person's point of view (frame of reference), even if you don't agree with it
- Don't insist on having the last word.



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## Reflecting on Listening

*Source: Used with permission. Weisberg, Mark, and Jean Koh Peters. Experiments in Listening. (For more information, contact Mark Weisberg <weisberg@post.queensu.ca>.)*

- What is the role of listening in your teaching? What is the balance of listening and speaking in your work life? In your life as a whole?
- What are the different ways in which you listen?
- What concrete circumstances or factors enhance your listening? What detracts from your listening?
- What would change if everyone at work or home listened slightly better?

Answer this question 10 times:

I would be a better listener if



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Keep a listening log: Observe your listening during an 8-hour day, for a 24-hour period, or for up to a week. Review the week, noting key points of listening in the days just past. Look for trends, critical incidents, rich moments, and factors that may have made you a better listener.

## Ideas for Vocabulary to Use in Your Peer Reviews

Source: Janice Johnson, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, UBC

### Reinforcing:

Great idea	Effective	Well-presented
Stimulating	Impressive	Provocative
Creative	Interesting	Important
Affecting	Clear	Inspiring
Useful	Moving	Valuable
Thought-provoking	Thorough	Evidently

I really enjoyed your teaching because . . .

You seem to enjoy . . .

It's very obvious that you . . .

- put a lot of effort into this

- thought a lot about this

What I like about how you teach is . . .

I really like what you've done here (& give an example)

\* *Tell people what it is they have done well!*

### Clarifications & Suggestions:

I wondered whether . . .

I'm curious about how you . . . came to this conclusion . . .

What I take from this is . . . . Is this what you meant?

I'm confused . . .

I'm not sure I agree . . .

At the end of your class, what I was wondering most was . . . .

. . . . Another way of saying this would be . . .

What would have happened had you . . .

The quality/content/?? of your teaching would have been



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improved/enriched/?? by . . .  
I had a hard time with this aspect of the class/the activity/?? because . . . I  
would have appreciated it if . . .  
You may wish to consider . . .  
. . . As an alternative . . .

\* *Give specific comments on "how to improve"*



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## Asking Questions

*Sources: Used with permission. Problem-based Learning Tutor-training Workshop, Faculty of Land and Food Systems, UBC, including material contributed by Ingrid Price and Alice Cassidy (former TAG, UBC) during the workshop's development.*

*Used with permission. Facilitator Development Workshop Handbook. April 2003. Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.*

### ***To elicit thinking and exploration:***

How do you define that?

I'm not clear about...

What do you think?

### ***To increase interest or reflection and to be forward-thinking:***

What does that mean to you?

Where do we go from here?

How might you do that differently next time?

What was the biggest surprise?

What are the implications for your future teaching and professional development?

### ***To decrease the challenge or 'defuse' a potentially tense situation:***

Should we tackle a piece of this and get to the rest in a bit?

What other views might there be?

Would it be better to get the big picture now and fill in some details a bit later?



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## Pre-observation Questions

(for reflection prior to pre-observation meeting)

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1. What are your learning objectives for your students in this class? What outcomes do you want them to achieve? What key concepts do you want them to grasp?

Why are these goals important? How do they fit into the overall course plan?

2. How will you know that your students have achieved this/these objective(s)?

Is there any other way you might find this out?

3. What is your plan for the class session? What will you be doing? What will your students be doing?
4. What strategies will you employ to engage your students (for example, to encourage deep approaches to learning) throughout the session? Why have you chosen these strategies?
5. Do you take a scholarly approach to your teaching? Can you give me some examples? Will that be part of the session I will be observing?



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## Classroom Observation Questions

*(For the peer reviewers)*

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1. Did the educator clearly communicate the learning objectives and key concepts? How?
2. Did the educator follow his/her plan for the class? If not, what changed? Why?
3. Were the students engaged throughout the class? How did they demonstrate their engagement? If they weren't engaged, what changes did the educator make to his/her teaching to re-engage them?
4. If the educator planned on using a scholarly approach in this class, what happened?
5. Did the educator encourage deep approaches to learning? If so, please give an example.
6. Was the educator working on improving some aspect(s) of his/her teaching? If so, please give examples.
7. What worked well in this session?



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8. What suggestions do you have for the educator?



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## Post-observation Questions

*(For discussion between the reviewee and the peer reviewers)*

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1. How do you think/feel the session went? Why?
2. How do you feel your choice of teaching strategies contributed to your students' learning during this session? Please give examples.

Did your students achieve the learning objective(s)? Why or why not?

3. Did you accomplish any other goals you had for the session? Why or why not?
4. If you were working on some aspects of your teaching, how did that go? Please give an example.
5. If you were to teach this class over again, would you do anything differently? If yes, what would you change? Why? If not, why not?



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6. What will you be working on next to further improve your teaching? How will you begin?



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## Guidelines for the Written Report

*(For the peer reviewers)*

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The report consists of the following materials:

1. **Notes from the pre-observation meeting**

This may include notes taken by the peer reviewer during the meeting, a summary that the peer reviewer writes after the meeting, emailed or written answers that the reviewee wrote (if s/he wishes to submit them to the report), or similar kinds of notes.

2. **Notes that the peer reviewer takes during the classroom observation or a summary s/he writes immediately after**

It may take the form of prose, a chart or other similar kinds of tables. Note that if the reviewee chooses to have his/her class videotaped, the peer reviewer may take additional notes on the timing of various parts of the lesson (for future reference for the reviewee when 'reviewing' his/her DVD).

3. **Notes taken during the post-observation meeting**

This may include notes or a summary that the peer reviewer may take during the conversation and notes that summarize the conversation between the peer reviewer and the reviewee.

These notes/summaries make up the report, which is shared with the reviewee during the post-observation meeting and left with him/her at the end of the meeting.



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## Deep and Surface Approaches to Learning

Deep approach	Surface approach
Intention to understand Student maintains structure of the task	Intention only to complete task requirements Student distorts structure of the task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on 'what is signified' (e.g. the author's argument, or the concepts applicable to solving the problem)</li> <li>• Relate previous knowledge to new knowledge</li> <li>• Relate knowledge from different courses</li> <li>• Relate theoretical ideas to everyday experience</li> <li>• Relate and distinguish evidence and argument</li> <li>• Organize and structure content into a coherent whole</li> <li>• Internal emphasis: 'A window through which aspects of reality become visible, and more intelligible' (Entwhistle and Marton, 1984)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on 'the signs' (e.g. the words and sentences of the text, or unthinkingly on the formula needed to solve the problem)</li> <li>• Focus on unrelated parts of the task</li> <li>• Memorize information for assessments</li> <li>• Associate facts and concepts unreflectively</li> <li>• Fail to distinguish principles from examples</li> <li>• Treat the task as an external imposition</li> <li>• External emphasis: demands of assessments, knowledge cut off from everyday reality</li> </ul>

<p><b>Surface approaches</b> are encouraged by...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment methods emphasizing recall or the application of trivial procedural knowledge</li> <li>• Assessment methods that create anxiety</li> <li>• Cynical or conflicting methods about rewards</li> <li>• An excessive amount of material in the curriculum</li> <li>• Poor or absent feedback on progress</li> <li>• Lack of independence in studying</li> <li>• Lack of interest in or background knowledge on the subject matter</li> <li>• Previous experiences of educational settings that encourage these approaches</li> </ul> <p><b>Deep approaches</b> are encouraged by...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and assessment methods that foster active and long-term engagement with learning tasks</li> <li>• Stimulating and considerate teaching, especially teaching which demonstrates the lecturer's personal commitment to the subject matter and stresses its meaning and relevance to students</li> <li>• Clearly stated academic expectations</li> </ul>
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- Opportunities to exercise responsible choice in the method and content of study
- Interest in and background knowledge in the subject matter
- Previous experiences of educational settings that encourage these approaches

**Source:** Ramsden, P. (2003) *Learning to teach in higher education*. (p.47) 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.



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# Some Definitions

## Learning Objectives

Learning objectives answer this question:

“What will the learners be able to do or know or have experienced by the end of the lesson/course that they couldn’t do or didn’t know or hadn’t experienced when it started?”

Learning objectives are written using active verbs. One way to begin writing a learning objective is to complete the statement:

By the end of the lesson/course, learners will (be able to) . . . [active verb] . . .

## Formative Feedback/Assessment

Formative feedback/assessment is feedback provided during a teaching experience or during a course that the person receiving the feedback can use to improve what s/he is doing during the experience/course.

The alternative to formative feedback/assessment is summative, which is feedback provided at the end of an experience/course that the person receiving the feedback can use to improve what s/he is doing the next time they do it.

## Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback is feedback given to someone that does two things. First, it identifies and celebrates what is going well/what that person is doing well. Second, it makes suggestions about possible ways to improve what is being done that may lead to improvement. The suggestions are focused on things that can be changed, and recognize that there is more than one way to do something well.

## Active Learning

Active learning takes place when learners are engaged in their learning, often participating in interactive group activities that require them to apply what they are learning.

## Scholarly Teaching

Scholarly teaching is good teaching that is reflective and evidence-based, maintaining ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ or knowledge about how to teach your specific content.



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Scholarly teachers reflect on their teaching and ask themselves questions such as: *"What am I doing? Why? Is it working? How do I know? What theories, principles and values underpin or spring from my practice?"*

(Herteiss, 2003).

More at [http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/drupal/?q=sotl\\_activities](http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/drupal/?q=sotl_activities)



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