



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology

Developing Your Skills as a Peer Reviewer of Teaching: Introductory Workshop

This workshop was originally designed by Dr. Alice Cassidy and Ms. Janice Johnson at the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (University of British Columbia). The materials in this handbook are part of a facilitated workshop on the peer review of teaching. If you would like such a workshop led for your group, please contact Dr. Isabeau Iqbal.

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<http://ctl.ubc.ca/programs/ubc-community/peer-review-of-teaching/>

The learning outcomes for this workshop are that, by the end of the session, you will be able to:

- Describe a Formative Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) process that is informed by the literature
- Provide constructive feedback for the person you are reviewing
- Conduct appropriate pre- and post-observation meetings for a peer review process
- Respond to various PRT situations
- Describe one or more ways you might go about writing a relevant and concise peer review of teaching report

Process Checklist for Formative Peer Review Program Participants

The Peer Review process referred to in this handbook and supported by the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, is intended primarily for formative (and developmental) feedback. Some units at the University of British Columbia (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 reviews of teaching.

Requesting a Peer Review of Teaching

To request a peer review of your teaching, please go to <http://ctl.t.ubc.ca/programs/ubc-community/peer-review-of-teaching/> > and click on the “Reviewers” tab (this list is modified on an ongoing basis). Once you have read through the reviewer bios and selected someone you think might be a good fit, please email one of the reviewers directly.

In your initial email, we suggest you include:

- Contact information
- Faculty and/or departmental affiliation
- 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
- 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.

Before the Pre-Observation Meeting

- 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 (ideally, this takes place approximately one week after the classroom observation)

- Prepare for the pre-observation meeting by reviewing and reflecting on the list of pre-observation questions (download PDF at the Process tab at <http://ctlft.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 your own 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. Ideally, this meeting can take place approximately one week after the classroom observation (download PDF at the Process tab at <http://ctlft.ubc.ca/programs/all-our-programs/peer-review-of-teaching/>).
- Review, reflect on, and respond to (optional) the peer reviewer's feedback report.
- 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.

Active Listening Skills

Listening

Active listening is a state of hearing the other person, avoiding premature judgment, reflecting understanding, clarifying information through restating a paraphrased version of the speaker's message and asking questions, summarizing, and sharing.

References:

Hoppe, M. H. (2006). *Active listening: Improving your ability to listen and lead*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Weger, H., Castle Bell, G., Minei, E. M., & Robinson, M. C. (2014). The relative effectiveness of active listening in initial interactions. *International Journal of Listening*, 28(1), 13-31. DOI:10.1080/10904018.2013.813234

The text below on Active Listening is 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.

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 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

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 ...
 ...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?
 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

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 (and 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 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".*

Asking Questions

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?

Pre-observation Questions

(For the person being reviewed – questions to think about prior to pre-observation meeting)

Formative Peer Review of Teaching Program

1. What are your goals, as a teacher, for the class I will be observing?

2. What learning outcomes have you articulated for your students in this class? Why are these outcomes important?
 - How do they fit into the overall course plan?
 - How are the learning outcomes communicated to your students (for the class and course)?
 - As you planned these learning outcomes, how did you take into consideration your students' different knowledge levels and backgrounds?
 - How will you know that your students have achieved these outcomes?

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 make the session relevant and engaging to students from different backgrounds?
 - Why have you chosen these strategies?
 - If relevant, how do you take social and emotional aspects of learning (e.g., students' emotional responses to a discussion topic, students' interactions in group work, power relations between students and the instructor) into consideration in designing the class?

5. To date, what sources have you drawn from to grow as a teacher (eg., mentors, literature, teaching and learning listservs, own research, other)?

Classroom Observation Questions

(For the peer reviewer(s))

Formative Peer Review of Teaching Program

1. Was the educator working on improving some aspect(s) of his/her teaching and student learning? If so, please give examples.
2. What approaches and methods did the educator use to communicate the learning outcomes and key concepts?
3. How, if at all, did the educator assess whether the intended learning outcomes were met?
 - In what (other) ways did the educator meet his/her goals for the class?
4. Did the educator follow his/her plan for the class? If not, what changed? Why?
5. What active learning strategies were used in the class?
6. How, if at all, did students demonstrate their engagement in the class and topic?
 - How do you describe the social and emotional dynamics (e.g., dynamics among students, between the educator and students) in this class?
7. How did the educator respond to the different dynamics?
8. What worked well in this session?
9. What suggestions do you have for the educator?

Post-observation Questions

*(Questions for the reviewee to reflect on before the post-observation meeting.
Responses can be discussed at the post-observation meeting)*

Formative Peer Review of Teaching Program

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.
 - If relevant, how did you tend to the social and emotional aspects of learning (e.g., students' emotional response to a discussion topic, students' reactions in group work, power relations between students and the instructor) during the class?

3. Did your students achieve the learning outcomes(s)? Why or why not?
 - 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?

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

Guidelines for the Written Report *(For the peer reviewers)*

Formative Peer Review of Teaching Program

In the UBC CTLT Formative Peer Review of Teaching Program, the report may consist 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 recorded, the peer reviewer may take additional notes on the timing of various parts of the lesson (for future reference for the reviewee when 'reviewing' the recording).

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 can 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.

Definitions

(In the Context of Peer Review of Teaching)

Formative and Summative Peer Review of Teaching

Formative peer review of teaching describes activities “that provide teachers with information that they can use to improve their teaching. The information is intended for their personal use, rather than for public inspection...” Summative peer review of teaching “focuses on information needed to make a personnel decision—for example, hiring, promotion, tenure, merit pay... Since it is not intended to provide rich and detailed data for the improvement of teaching it is often more general and comparative in nature than data for formative evaluation” (Chism, 2007, p. 5).

Learning Outcomes

Statements that define what a student should be able to do/know/value at the end of a course of study. Harden (2002) defines learning outcomes as “broad statements of what is achieved and assessed at the end of a course of study” (p. 151). Eisner (1979) (cited in Allan, 1996) states that outcomes are “broad overarching consequences of learning which do not meet stringer criteria which necessarily apply to behaviour objectives” (Allen, 1996, p. 99).

Learning outcomes strive to 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?”

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

Formative feedback/assessment is “information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning” (Schute, 2008, p. 154).

Summative Feedback

Summative assessment is often referred to as “high-stakes”; it provides “a final judgement or evaluation of proficiency” (Ambrose et al. p. 139). Information from summative assessment can be applied to future situations (e.g., next time the educator teaches the course).

Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback (1) identifies and celebrates what is going well/what that person is doing well and (2) suggests 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 (Ovando, 1994).

Active Learning

“Active learning is generally defined as any instructional method that engages students in the learning process...[it] requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing.... The core elements of active learning are student activity and engagement in the learning process. Active learning is often contrasted to the traditional lecture where students passively receive information from the instructor” (Prince, 2004, p. 1).

References for Definitions Section:

- Allan, J. (1996). Learning outcomes in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education* 21(1): 93-108. DOI: 10.1080/03075079612331381487
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