

LFA Procedure 5.6

Peer Observation

1. Introduction to peer observation

Peer observation is used as one way of evaluating teaching delivery rather than teaching content. Observation also allows, facilitates and encourages course level and departmental level reflection and discussion on a wider range of teaching practices and issues, including but not exclusively: links to curriculum design, VLE, learning activities, use of tutorials, student evaluations and feedback, as well as student support and guidance work. This may include staff or tutor reflective techniques, as well as methods for teaching in an international and multi-cultural context. It is expected that each course develops and operates a peer observation scheme annually for all teaching staff.

It should be noted that observation can look at any pedagogical practice between a tutor and students, so it not only includes lectures and seminars, but can also encompass tutorials, feedback/debrief sessions and the like. The operative concept is that there is pedagogical practice through interaction with learners that can be observed.

2. Aims

The intention of the peer observation scheme is to allow teaching staff to explore and develop their understanding of student learning and to improve the student experience of study at London Film Academy (LFA). Peer observation is thus an academic quality enhancement mechanism that contributes to raising the profile of learning and teaching and scholarship. Specifically, the peer observation at LFA aims to:

- promote a culture in which good teaching is valued and to enhance teaching quality at the point of delivery by encouraging reflection on practice;
- provide a supportive and constructive framework for the LFA to review, reflect upon and improve the quality of its teaching;
- enhance the quality of teaching by providing an effective framework for the identification and dissemination of good teaching practice;
- enhance the quality of teaching by identifying staff development needs;
- ensure that all teaching staff undergoing peer observation are treated in a fair and consistent manner.

3. Peer observation process

LFA staff or tutors who deliver teaching or instruction in any element of a credit-bearing courses are expected to:

- take part in the peer observation process at least annually as both a peer observer and an observee. An exception is Course Leader, who should only be an observee to avoid any confusion with performance related observations;
- contribute to the development of peer observation as a process in order to improve the student learning experience;
- be sensitive to the expectation of confidentiality of the discussions between observer and observee;
- share examples of good practice with the wider LFA.

All peer observers will be given instructions on best practice when carrying out an observation. For new staff and tutors, the Course Leader must explain the purpose of peer observation and how it is conducted at LFA. They should be peer observed in the first semester of their teaching. In cases where



staff development needs have been identified, the observer and observee may agree to carry out a further observation session after consultation with the Head of Courses;

In arranging peer observations, observers should bear in mind the extent to which an observed session contributes to successful delivery of the learning outcomes specified for the module in question.

The Course Leader is responsible for pairing observers with observees. They should normally arrange for the pairings for observation to change for consecutive observations.

Peer observation will normally involve a single observer observing one teaching session. Good practice would be for an observer to be observed by someone different to whom they have observed; the process should be viewed as peer observation rather than pair observation.

An alternative is for the Course Leader to institute a structure of triads, so each staff member or tutor is observed twice and performs two observations. The three triad members would meet for a pre-observation meeting, and again for a post-observation meeting, so that the extra time commitment is only an hour. The rationale for triads is to create a more general context about teaching in a department, rather than focus on individual practice.

3.1 Before the observation

At least two weeks before the observation, the observer/observee should establish a mutually agreed time for the observation to take place.

Each observee will need to discuss, in advance, with their observer, areas of focus considered relevant to the observed session. The observee should complete the initial part of the observation/feedback form prior to this discussion, which will then inform the observation. This is a part of quality enhancement which will add value to the observation.

3.2 At the time of the observation

The peer observer must arrive punctually for the teaching session selected for observation with the tutor. If the observer arrives too late for the start of the session, they should not carry out the observation but should arrange with the tutor to observe another session.

The observer should position themselves in the observed teaching session so as to intrude as little as is practicable. They should also refrain from participating in the session.

The observer should take care that students cannot see any notes made during the session.

The observer must use the observation/feedback form provided and submit the form to the Course Leader.

Immediately following the session, the observer should normally spend some time with the observee providing verbal feedback. It is important that the verbal comments should be consistent with those that eventually appear on the report form.

3.3 After the observation

The peer observer and observee should complete the summary form provided, which will be forwarded to the Course Leader or designate (Senior Course Coordinator) for appropriate action. The Course Leader might also identify any strategic issues raised in respect of learning and teaching development and may need to identify resources and/or opportunities to support the development of individual members of staff or tutor following the peer observation.



Immediately following the conclusion of the peer observation exercise for the academic year, the Course Leader should meet with the Head of Courses to discuss the strategic/best practice aspects of the observations undertaken. There should then be wider circulation within LFA of the matters raised within the Peer Observation exercise via the Course Committees.

4. Development, review and enhancement

Good practice identified during peer observation should be anonymised, summarised and referred, where relevant, by the Head of Courses to the Student-Staff Liaison Committee, Academic Board and Senior Management Committee.

