

Peer Observation

The University supports the peer observation of teaching staff as an aid to the development of both observer and observed, to help them improve the effectiveness of their teaching. It recognises that there is no good “one size fits all” approach to peer observation, and that it may make sense for departments to operate their own systems for the maximum benefit of teaching and learning within their specific department and subject area.

However, the University believes that there are minimum principles that should be adopted across the whole of the University’s teaching. These minimum principles are as follows:

1. All members of Lancaster University academic staff who are involved in regular teaching should have their teaching observed by a colleague, preferably from the same department, at least once every two years.
2. All members of Lancaster University academic staff who are involved in regular teaching and who are on a probationary contract should have their teaching observed by a colleague, preferably from the same department, at least once every year.
3. All other people involved in regular teaching, including external teachers and GTAs, should have their teaching observed by an academic from the relevant department at least once every year.
4. Every member of Lancaster University academic staff who is involved in regular teaching should observe the teaching of a colleague at least once every two years.
5. All observations should be undertaken in a spirit of constructive and friendly support, to aid the development of excellence in teaching in both the observed and the observer.
6. Each observation should be followed by a private conversation between observer and observed with a view to establishing:
 - a. what they have learnt from the process
 - b. how the effectiveness of their teaching might be improved
 - c. whether they can identify good practice which can usefully be disseminated across the department and/or beyond.
7. After these discussions, the Head of Department should be informed that observation has taken place, and a record should be kept of observer, observed, date and module involved. It is not necessary to keep any further record of the observation or the ensuing discussion.
8. This policy does not specify how observer/observed pairs should be chosen – this is to be determined by individual departments.
9. Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that these minimum principles are put into practice.
10. Departments are encouraged to operate these principles in the way that best suits them, and to go beyond the minimum where they wish to do so.