

Peer lesson review

Working with supportive colleagues who peer reviewing our teaching can help us gain insights into our own teaching practice.

Peer lesson review is good for:

- Revisiting the place and purpose of classes in the wider syllabus
- Re-view session design through new eyes and thus, e.g., alternative conceptual lenses
- Explore alternative sequencing, student-facing tasks, and/or language choices



PREPARATION:

Find willing colleagues; select lessons for review on the basis of student feedback, curriculum review or your own critical reflection.



TIMING:

Plan what you want from the review to make the best use of time. 30 minutes is probably a minimum, more if you can.



PEOPLE:

Two's company, more could be a crowd if not carefully focused.



EQUIPMENT:

Printed versions of session materials; session plan. Consider videoing the class.

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INTRODUCTION

Critically evaluating the quality and effectiveness of individual classes is an ongoing process. Evaluation will evolve over time, with changing student cohorts and wider developments in a module or programme. Peer review among colleagues can be one useful way of more easily recognising and acting on the need for review and development.

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FOCUS

Select one or more lessons for peer review. Decide which aspects it is you wish to revisit. Is it the content or concepts themselves? Is it how these are sequenced – the storyline of the class? It is more a question of likely / actual student engagement during the session? Or maybe you don't know where the problem is – in which case a like-minded colleague or two can help identify this with you.

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FIT

One place to begin peer review of a lesson is to interrogate the place and purpose of the particular session. Using your colleague(s) as sounding boards, ask: Where does this class fit in the wider module? Why is it here, in a particular week or point in the course? Why not elsewhere? What do you seek to achieve with this material? What are your teaching aims? What are the learning aims? How (far) does this session move student understanding forwards?

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STORYLINE

Re-visit the selection, sequencing and pacing of material in the session. Ask your colleague(s) to tell you how far they think this class structure best realises your stated purposes and goals (cf. 3. FIT). What are alternative 'storylines' for the session? What might be the effects for student learning of a different sequencing? How might learner engagement be enhanced by spending less time here and more time there?

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ENACTMENT

Your slides and handouts are not the class. You need to lift the lesson off the page at point of need for the students in the room. Have colleagues help you consider the live unfolding of the session. Is it accessible to the full diversity of your group? Where might there be questions? Do you need to turn 'talk' into a task? Is some re-design needed?

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EXPERIMENTING

When you meet to discuss the observation, ask your colleagues to describe what they saw. If they offer comments on the success (or otherwise) of a particular practice, ask also for concrete illustrations. As an alternative, have your colleagues only ask questions, rather than telling you about the class.

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OPTIONS

Suggestions above can be used separately or together. Many other approaches are possible. Grab a colleague at the photocopier for a steer on an idea for in-class assessment, or a student task. Find someone in a very different discipline, to enable peer review that avoids 'group think' and pushes you into new ways of thinking.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

