

Peer observation



Other people can often see aspects of your practice that you might not.

Peer observation of your teaching can offer:

- Fresh perspectives on your classroom pedagogy
- Ideas for possible alternatives and enhancements to your current approach
- Practical foundations for development that benefits both you and your students.



PREPARATION:

Find a peer observer. Meet to talk over session plans and observation focuses. Agree a date for a post-class discussion.



TIMING:

Negotiate to suit purpose, focus and busyness. Observation may range from 30 minutes to a full 2-hour class.



PEOPLE:

Usually 1 peer observer, but why not experiment with 2?



EQUIPMENT:

Consider using a written observation template. With consent, you might also choose to video the class.

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INTRODUCTION

Peer observation of teaching is most insightful and beneficial when it is approached non-judgementally. Whatever approach you take, try to ensure that observation and feedback discussions remain grounded in descriptions of practice and illustrative evidence.

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PURPOSE

If you are initiating the peer observation, be clear what you wish to gain from the experience. Do you want feedback on:

- New content?
- Class tasks you have designed?
- Student engagement?
- The clarity of your explanations?
- Your interactions with individuals?

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FOCUS

Knowing your purpose(s) enables you to decide on the scope and focus of the peer observation.

- Will your colleague sit in on the whole session?
- Is it better that they join only part of the session?
- Should they focus only on what students do?
- Should they focus on your board work?

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PRE-OBSERVATION

The observee should take the lead here. Make it clear what you seek to understand and gain from the presence of a colleague in your teaching session. You might ask your colleague to respond only to particular questions that you have about your practice, such as 'How clear are my responses to student questions?'

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IN THE CLASS

Give some advance consideration to where your colleague will sit. Ensure there will be room for them, that students will not be distracted, and that your colleague will be well positioned to see clearly those aspects of your session you have chosen as the focus for peer observation.

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DEBRIEF

When you meet to discuss the observation, ask your colleague 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 colleague only ask questions, rather than telling you about the class.

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OPTIONS

There are many ways to vary how peer observation is done. Use the Education Strategy to inform your focus: e.g., the inclusivity of your practice. Video a section of your class and conduct a peer viewing and discussion, instead of a 'live' observation. Pause the video to consider alternative pathways and possible changes.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

