FORMATIVE PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

Why do formative peer review of teaching?

USQ has adopted a voluntary and formative approach to the peer review of teaching to facilitate continuous improvement in teaching excellence at USQ. Your participation in the program will contribute to building your track record in university learning and teaching by:

- providing evidence of your reflections and efforts to improve your teaching in your portfolio, CV, teaching award applications, or promotional applications
- engaging with constructive feedback about your teaching practice;
- developing strategies to improve your teaching;
- sharing conversations about continuous improvement and best practices; and
- creating collaborations for potential teaching improvement projects or scholarship of teaching and learning projects.

What are the key principles of formative peer review of teaching?

- The primary focus is on the improvement or enhancement of teaching and learning, not on evaluating or reporting on teaching quality.
- The primary goal is excellence in teaching, not conformity to minimum teaching standards.
- Peers are recognised as a valuable source for ideas and insights on teaching and serve as collaborators in teaching improvement rather than as auditors or judges.
- The responsibility for improving student learning and outcomes lies with the teacher, rather than with an external regulatory group.

What are the key elements of effective formative peer review of teaching?

- Effective peer review is voluntary. Although it may be suggested by supervisors or support units, individual teachers must commit to peer review themselves.
- The outcomes of peer review may not be mandated for promotion or rewards. A teacher may decide to inform a supervisor, promotion panel, or award application of such outcomes, or they might decide to include aspects of the feedback received and consequent teaching changes. However, the release of the information remains at the discretion of the teacher, not their supervisor.
- Although the identification of problems or issues can be a useful aspect of peer review, the
 focus should be on identifying excellent practices and creating new innovations for continual
 improvement.
- The peer review process should be organised and planned. Casual observation of someone's teaching can provide useful impressions, but a clear review plan and objectives will provide focus and maximise outcomes.

What do I do if I want a formative peer review of my teaching?

- Contact a member of your Faculty Support Team.
- Identify which aspects of your teaching you would like to be peer reviewed. This could include matters such as assessment, course design, learning objectives, resource materials, or online interactions.
- Identify who you would prefer to conduct the peer review of your teaching. This could be a colleague in your faculty, from another Faculty, from the USQ Teaching Academy or an LTSU staff member, or a small team of colleagues. In short, select a colleague whose expertise you value and with whom you feel comfortable.
- Clearly communicate, negotiate and establish roles, expectations and outcomes of the peer review process (see template).
- The results of the review should remain confidential between you and your reviewer/s unless you decide to share it for BUILD or promotion processes.
- If you decide to use your reviewer's comments, it is important to reach consensus with your reviewer about what comments will be shared, in what context and for what purpose. One practical way of doing this is through a co-written and co-signed review document.
- If you prefer your peer review to be conducted by a Faculty colleague, then LTSU can provide training and resources to get the most out of the peer review process. For example, LTSU can point you to templates, rubrics and criteria sheets for peer review of teaching, or even assist you in planning your objectives and procedures. Contact your LTSU Faculty Rep for more information.
- Once you have gone through an initial cycle of peer review, it is recommended to set a date for a follow up to provide an opportunity to incorporate suggested improvements.

LTSU online resources

- Peer observation of teaching/ review of course materials http://www.usq.edu.au/learnteach/topics/eval/posteval/othereval
- Video: Associate Professor Michele Scoufis 'Peer review of teaching on the learning' http://www.usq.edu.au/learnteach/learnres/vsarchive/mscoufis.

Further reading

• The ALTC Exchange has a wealth of materials and resources related to peer review of teaching. Some of this is related to summative peer review of teaching, but much is also directly relevant to formative peer review of teaching: http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/. The easiest way to find these resources on the site is by typing "peer review of teaching" into the keyword search box.

