University of Worcester logo


Peer-Supported Review of Teaching

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## Purpose

Peer supported review of teaching (PSRT) provides staff involved in teaching and pedagogic practice the opportunity to engage formally and informally in dialogue about the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning. The process is intended to make a significant contribution to an individual staff member’s professional development, and to enhance the teaching and learning process across the University.

## Overview

This policy sets out the objectives, expectations and principles that underpin PSRT at the University. Responsibility for implementing PSRT is devolved to Schools (and professional support departments that wish to implement such a scheme). Individual Schools have flexibility in designing the scheme to meet their own needs and priorities, but there should be commonality of purpose and principles. Guidance on implementing a scheme at School/Departmental level is also included.

PSRT is a deliberate move away from any sort of performance review based approach or peer observation, and towards a model based on equality between the reviewer and the reviewee. This model, therefore, is about formalising a learning conversation between two peers, who meet as colleagues, both of whom will have experience of teaching, so that the reviewer is in a position to assist the reviewee, in a structured context, to develop their teaching or the ways in which they support student learning. The means that the principal role of the reviewer is not to give ‘feedback’ in the traditional sense of the word, but rather to ask questions which will encourage the reviewee to reflect on and analyse their own practice.

PSRT gives staff control over the choice of topic of the review, and to a large extent the outcomes. PSRT also removes the element of ‘policing’ and the non-judgemental nature of this approach is key to engagement. The other benefit of this approach is its inclusive nature. Since there is no explicit requirement to observe teaching PSRT can be adopted by professional/service departments so that all staff involved in supporting student learning can be included. Of course that is not to say that the observation of a teaching session cannot form the focus of the review.

## Scope

The PSRT policy applies to all Schools within the University. Professional support departments engaged in supporting student learning are also encouraged to adopt a PSRT Scheme.

## The Policy

### 1 General

1.1 All University staff who teach or support student learning are expected to engage in personal and professional development to develop both knowledge and understanding of their subject area and also their teaching and learning practice.

1.2 The Peer Supported Review of Teaching (PSRT) is intended to provide space and structure for professional reflection and dialogue to enhance teaching practice for the benefit of individual staff, their peers and the learning experiences of students.

1.3 PSRT is designed to be supportive and developmental in nature and provide the opportunity for peers to interact with each other in a teaching and learning context. To that end it has the following defined purposes:

1. To enable staff to reflect on their own teaching practice and take responsibility for their on-going professional development needs
2. To provide an opportunity for staff to learn about different teaching and learning styles, approaches and methods
3. To engage staff in reflective and supported discussions about pedagogic practice
4. To share and disseminate effective or good practice with a view to enhancing the teaching and learning experiences of students.

1.4 Each School is required to establish and implement, on an annual basis, a PSRT scheme.

1.5 It is expected that all academic staff involved in teaching and learning will take part in at least two PSRT activities per year (one as peer reviewer and one as reviewee). This includes part-time, fractional and associate lecturers, and research students who contribute to teaching and learning support. Peer supported review can be of any activity related to learning or supporting learning, including lectures, seminars, workshops, practical classes, setting up of on-line sessions, supervision, tutorials etc.

### 2 Guiding Principles of PSRT

1. PSRT respects the professional autonomy of staff and gives control over the process to reviewee.
2. PSRT requires the reviewee to undertake self-evaluation through reflection on their practice.
3. PSRT is a developmental process designed to support peer learning among colleagues.
4. PSRT requires colleagues to work collaboratively on the basis of mutual trust and support.
5. The focus of PSRT is on the enhancement of professional practice, leading to an outstanding student learning experience.
6. While conversation and dialogue are at the heart of the process, other available evidence should also be made accessible to the reviewer, eg on-line materials.
7. PSRT needs to be workable for participating staff, and should not be burdensome in terms of time and administration.
8. Schools are responsible for implementing PSRT and for reporting annually on the process.

### 3 Recording and Reporting

3.1 A record of the review is produced by the reviewer and reviewee (using either the PSRT Record, or Teaching Observation Form, or appropriate alternative record form).  A copy is provided to the School Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator, and retained as evidence of process.

3.2 The School Learning and Teaching Coordinator (or nominee) writes an overview report on the implementation of PSRT as part of the School Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Evaluation Report. The report should comment on implementation, participation (including number and percentage of staff engaged in PSRT), and its key outcomes, together with identification of any professional development needs/plans for the School or for groups of staff.

### 4 Suggested Plan for Implementation

4.1 Each School’s Learning and Teaching co-ordinator ensures all members of the School/professional support department involved in teaching or supporting learning are assigned a reviewer. For example, this might involve organising inter-disciplinary/subject cluster groups, each with a designated co-ordinator.

* 1. Groups might be arranged to allow for as wide a range of practices and experience as possible, eg those interested in learning technologies or staff who are seeking to develop a problem based learning approach to learning and teaching. The initial role of the group co-ordinator would be to ensure each member of staff knows who their reviewer is and who they are reviewing. The cluster could be organised on the ‘daisy chain’ model ie one person reviews another member of the cluster, but not reciprocally.
  2. NB For professional support departments wishing to take part in PSRT, line managers are to put appropriate arrangements in place.
  3. Prior to the review, the reviewer and the reviewee meet briefly (or communicate via email) to establish the focus. The focus could involve observation of teaching or scrutiny of related professional practice, eg innovative assessment practice. The scheduling of the PSRT session or meeting does need to include time for an undisturbed, private, professional conversation.
  4. Reviewers have a responsibility to listen and support (and in some cases observe). While it is important to identify strengths and achievements, there should also be an emphasis on questioning which prompts reflection and encourages the reviewee to challenge him/herself to further develop and enhance their practice.
  5. A record of the review is produced. One copy is retained by the reviewee and a second copy is returned to the cluster group co-ordinator.

Copies of the signed, completed forms are sent to the Learning and Teaching   
Co-ordinator.

* 1. The LT Co-ordinator collates the forms and writes a brief overview reporting on the implementation of the School PSRT scheme in the School Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Evaluation report. Reports should identify the number and percentage of staff engaged in PSR, and its key outcomes, together with identification of any professional development needs/plans.

## Related Policies, Documents or Webpages

[Peer Supported Review of Teaching Form](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/qed/documents/Peer_Supported_Review_of_Teaching_Form.docx) [accessed on 30/11/2020]

## Approval/Review Table

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| **Item** | **Notes** |
| Version Number | 1.2 |
| Date of Approval | 25/06/2015 |
| Approved by | ASQEC |
| Effective from | 01/09/2015 |
| Policy Officer | Director of Quality and Educational Development |
| Department | Directorate of Quality and Educational Development |
| Review date | 30/07/2023 |
| Last reviewed | 30/07/2020 |
| Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) | n/a |
| Accessibility Checked | 24/11/2020 |