

POSTGRADUATE TRAINING SEMINAR

Peer Observations

In this session, we aim to understand the main elements of Peer Observation.

1. “Free-range” Peer Observations

- What did the TA do same/differently than you?
- How was the classroom atmosphere? Were students responsive (should they be)?
- Are there things you are now considering incorporating into (or removing from) your own sessions?

2. A more structured approach to peer observations

- Typically in three phases
 - Pre-observation meeting: lesson objectives, desired areas of improvement
 - Observation: instructor (and students!) informed prior to observation, objective and descriptive record of session taken
 - Post-observation meeting: discussion about the session, reflection on possible changes in practice and action plan
- Examples of Peer Observation forms: University of Leicester, QMUL, americanenglish.state.gov
 - Benefits for Observer vs. Observee
 - Purpose of peer observations? Tool for improving practice or assessment mechanism? What about in light of REF/TEF?

3. Question: could we incorporate students into this process? Try the 3-question quiz from Dr. Hallett’s essay (passed out last time/on QMPlus), entitled *Are we encouraging our students to think mathematically?*

An excellent project for you to consider would be to create a bespoke Peer Observation form specific to the goals and needs of mathematics graduate students. In particular, many of the HR-type rubrics are not pertinent to the goals of observing and being observed at this stage in your careers. However, we need to start somewhere, so let’s weigh in on some possible issues!

1. What should our peer observation sheet look like? (table, short answer, open/free, etc.)

2. Topics we could include for consideration

- Organization
- Clarity
- Enthusiasm
- Content
- Interaction
- Pacing
- Speaking
- Rapport
- Teaching Strategies

3. Are pre-/post-meetings a good idea, or should this be part of our seminar instead?

4. Other items to include?

Supplementary Reading: *Twelve tips for peer observation of teaching*, by Z. S. Siddiqui, D. Jonas-Dwyer, and S. Carr. *Medical Teacher*, v.29 297-300 (2007).

*If I were again beginning my studies, I would follow the advice of Plato and start with mathematics”
–Galileo Galilei*