



Peer Review & Enhancement

Frequently Asked Questions

 *These FAQs provide guidance in support of the policy’s implementation*

* **How do I choose my partner?**

This is determined within departments. Often staff will choose their own PRE partnerships. It is important that partners trust each other enough to talk about any aspect of practice.

* **Can I choose what is observed?**

Normally, you will decide what aspect of your practice is observed. You will be expected to indicate this to the person in your department who is responsible for monitoring engagement with PRE but you will never be asked to explain why you have chosen this or show the feedback you receive – that is confidential between you and your peer.

However, you and your peer can agree that it would be useful to share any of this detail at your discretion – but please do make sure you both agree! It can be very useful to others to hear about what you have found and why you felt it was important. Sharing the *outcomes* of PRE *is* an expectation of the process.

* **Can I choose the focus for enhancement?**

Normally, you will decide what aspect of your practice you want to develop through PRE. In some circumstances you may need to ask your line manager for support and, depending on what you need, they may make a judgement that your request is not realistic or that it cannot be met. However, managers are expected to engage with PRE in a supportive way and will normally help you to come up with realistic development plans if needed.

* **How is my PRE monitored and is it confidential?**

A key principle for PRE to work is that it is a confidential and trustful process.

Because it is mandatory for departments to support your PRE, it needs to be monitored. Records of engagement are maintained within the department therefore and line managers may choose to establish broad strategic development themes to frame PRE within the department – but the detail of your observation is for you and your PRE partner alone. The policy says,

“The *general* *outcomes* of the Peer Review & Enhancement process will inform part of the discussion during the annual PDR process and inform individual personal development planning and College, Departmental and University plans.” This ensures you can identify further development opportunities as an outcome of PRE while it allows the department to develop its additional plans for arranging related development activities.

* **Do my partner and I have to enhance the same aspect of our practices?**

It makes sense to have a common focus that leads to a collaborative enhancement activity. It is not required however, nor is it always feasible to arrange this.

* **Can my PRE partner come from another part of the University?**

Yes. This can be a good way to spread good practice across the University. However, PRE is an excellent tool for promoting course-focused practice leading to greater consistency of the student experience, especially around aspects of innovative practice. Working together as course team members can really help to develop your student’s satisfaction.

* **How much time should I spend on PRE?**

PRE happens in your work time using some of the time all academics have assigned to Self-Managed Time (SMT), which is sometimes referred to as time for Personal Scholarly Activity (PSA).

As a rule of thumb, a typical observation of lecturing will require that you spend time planning the activity with your peer so they know what they are looking at and what they need to look for. You need to undertake the observed activity. Then your peer needs to talk through the written feedback they have produced. You will need to do the same for your partner. Following the review activities, you are expected to engage in an enhancement activity to develop aspects of your practice highlighted in the review.

You may need to discuss with your line manager about how much time you can dedicate to enhancement activities and over what period of time. Time for sharing what you have learnt with others in your subject group or elsewhere may also need to be planned.

* **Is it just about lecturing?**

No. The policy expects you to select from a range of methods you use in the course of your academic practice, which you determine to be appropriate to review, reflect on and develop.

Academic practice is multidimensional. You *may* want to examine your approaches to lecturing – many people do. Or you might want to focus on how you give feedback, or how effectively you teach in an online environment. There are so many important aspects of teaching that can benefit from peer observation and support.

Further, within your chosen area of focus, you need to think carefully about what aspect of that practice is particularly important to you. Ask, “What’s been nagging me?”

* **Can I ask my students to observe me?**

Asking students for feedback, formally or informally, is a part of good practice. The feedback you receive may be used in PRE, but PRE itself involves peers in a buddy relationship. It is often about comparing and sharing practices and the relationship should feel equal. So, no, you must work with fellow academics.

* **Should I ask my line manager to observe me?**

This is not normally advisable. However confident you are in your working relationship, you need to be absolutely sure you can trust each other enough to comment on or reveal things about your practice without fear of repercussion.

* **Can I work with peers who are more, or less, senior or experienced than me?**

This is often recommended. People with more or less experience can often spot things that others can’t – both in terms of learning from their peer and in terms of identifying factors for feedback and discussion.