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Peer Review Policy

Metanoia Institute

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1. Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. Metanoia Institute is committed to continuously enhancing the quality of its learning and teaching provision. We are equally committed to supporting the ongoing professional development of all teaching staff through structured reflection and collaborative feedback.

1.2. The Peer Review of Teaching Policy supports a culture of constructive, evidence-informed dialogue among colleagues, focused on the enhancement of pedagogical effectiveness, student engagement, and inclusive learning practice.

1.3. The process is fundamentally developmental in nature, aiming to support academic growth and teaching excellence. However, it also contributes, where appropriate, to formal staff development, annual review processes, and institute quality assurance.

1.4. This Policy is aligned with the UK Quality Code (QAA, 2024), the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), and guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), ensuring that peer review supports both enhancement and institutional governance responsibilities.

1.5. All academic staff, including full-time, part-time, fractional, and hourly-paid (averaging 80+ hours annually), are encouraged and expected to participate.

2. Policy Objective

2.1. To foster pedagogical reflection and professional learning through peer dialogue.

2.2. To disseminate good practice and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement.

2.3. To feed developmentally into annual review processes, at the discretion of the staff member.

2.4. To ensure that any significant concerns arising during peer review regarding safety, professionalism, or fitness to teach can be followed up sensitively and appropriately through the Institute’s established academic and HR processes.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to peer reviews undertaken for developmental purposes and complements but is distinct from formal probation-related observations.

3.2. Outcomes may be discussed within annual review meetings but are not mandatory unless specific concerns arise (see Section 6.4).

3.3. Feedback is shared with the Head of Programme through a standardised reporting summary (see Section 7) to support quality enhancement, CPD planning, and assurance that appropriate follow-up or support is available if needed.

4. Strategic and Regulatory Alignment

4.1 This Peer Review Policy supports Metanoia Institute's Strategic Plan and aligns with its four institutional pillars:
- Inclusion: By fostering diverse participation in reflective peer engagement.
- Innovation: By encouraging experimentation and the development of new pedagogic strategies.
- Intelligence: Through data-informed enhancement of teaching and learning practice.
- Sustainability: By embedding peer learning into long-term CPD practice.

5. Dissemination of good practice

5.1 The Peer Review process is intended to help identify and share good practice across the Institute to enhance teaching and learning more widely and improve the student learning experience.

5.2 It should lead to tangible outputs such as teaching and learning enhancement activities; training sessions; revisions to operational planning for programme development and review and provide clear evidence for quality assurance purposes of monitoring and evidencing strategic level support for resourcing staff development activity.

6. Frequency

6.1 All relevant academic staff should participate in peer review at least once every two academic years, with encouragement to engage more frequently for maximum benefit.

6.2 All staff are also encouraged to act as peer reviewers.

7. Student involvement

7.1 While other formal mechanisms are in place for student evaluation of modules and programmes, students can still make a valuable contribution to Peer Review of learning and teaching. Staff are encouraged to incorporate student feedback into Peer Review wherever possible.

8. Process Overview

8.1 The process includes:
- A pre-observation meeting
- A teaching observation (or equivalent professional discussion)
- A post-observation reflective dialogue
- Completion of proformas: Pre-Review Form, Reviewer Notes, Reviewee Reflection, and Record of Session

8.2 These forms should be submitted to the Peer Review Coordinator, and a summary of each review shared with the Head of Programme for inclusion as appropriate in annual reporting cycles.

9. Developmental Use and Safeguards

9.1 Peer Review is designed to be non-judgmental, supportive, and confidential, fostering trust and engagement.

9.2 The Reviewee retains ownership of the detailed feedback.

9.3 Reviewees are encouraged to reflect on peer review in their annual staff review or as part of a fellowship application, promotion case, or CPD plan.

9.4 In the rare event that a reviewer identifies an issue which may present a significant concern relating to student safety, fitness to teach, or professional conduct, the Reviewer will consult confidentially with the Peer Review Coordinator. Where appropriate, and with sensitivity, the concern may be escalated to the Head of Programme and/ or HR in accordance with relevant Institute procedures.

10. Reporting and Oversight

10.1 The Peer Review Coordinator, in liaison with Heads of Programme, will ensure a schedule is in place annually.

10.2 The Coordinator will retain anonymised records of peer review coverage and generate an annual report to the Education Committee and Academic Board. This report will include:

- Participation statistics
- Summary of strengths and good practice
- Common themes for enhancement
- Recommendations for CPD or curriculum planning

10.3 Heads of Programme will receive a brief summary of all peer reviews conducted within their programme (excluding sensitive detail), enabling informed support and alignment with programme enhancement goals.

10.4 All reviewers will receive initial and refresher training to ensure consistency, cultural humility, and confidence in giving developmental feedback.

11. Confidentiality and Professional Integrity

11.1 While peer review is a collegial and reflective practice, professional boundaries and confidentiality must be respected. Review records will be stored securely and used only in accordance with this policy.

11.2 Summary information (as outlined above) will be used to support strategic enhancement and programme assurance, not to make evaluative judgments about individuals unless serious concerns arise.

PROCEDURE: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

12. Frequency

12.1 The scale of staff involvement in Peer Review may vary between programmes. For example, where a programme has large numbers of part-time and sessional staff, responsibility for overseeing allocation of Peer Review activity and the frequency with which certain staff participate in the Peer Review process should be commensurate with their teaching and/or supporting learning responsibilities.

13. Structure for Peer Review

13.1 The coordinator will discuss structures with each Head of Programme annually to ensure they are fully informed of programme design constraints, timetabling options and staff availability due to delivery or assessment schedule considerations. These structures will be clearly communicated to staff.

13.2 Some possibilities are (a) free choice of reciprocal peer review pairs; (b) small, self-forming groups of people who peer review each other; (c) relationships around existing team-teaching arrangements; (d) allocated peer review partnerships across programmes.

13.3 Peer Review partnerships should normally change in each cycle in order to facilitate sharing of good practice and different perspectives over time.

13.4 Staff will be informed every January/ February that Peer activity will be taking place from March –June every year (subject to team activity and programme specific time constraints. Please note, activity can take place outside of these periods if suitable for programme structures.

14. Staffing

14.1 All Staff will be invited to apply to join the pool of Peer Review staff.

14.2 Initial training offered to support this activity will be based upon an individual’s background, experience of similar processes and formal qualifications for the post of Tutor/ Assessor.

14.3 Additionally, regular staff training will be held in a group setting.

15. Cross-curricular collaboration

15.1 In each review cycle, Heads of Programme will be encouraged by the coordinator to consider opportunities for cross-modality Peer Review, which can be beneficial in terms of focussing reflection on pedagogy, and less on subject content.

16. Organisation

16.1 The coordinator in charge of this process will liaise with Associate Directors/ Heads of Programme to draw up a list of staff to be observed in each term. This is circulated to the relevant teams in September.

16.2 The coordinator, in liaison with the Heads of Programme, draws up a schedule of review listing who is observing whom and shall circulate this at the beginning of each term to members of the teaching team. This should not always be senior staff observing junior staff but should be a mix, for example, junior staff observing senior staff and staff on similar grades observing each other.

16.3 The Reviewer will contact the staff member to be observed, and the Reviewer and Reviewee will agree which session(s) is to be observed. They should agree what to observe e.g. type of teaching/learning session, type of student, stage of study etc. The arrangements should ideally be made to cover an entire session but can be, for example, the first hour of a two-hour session, the staff involved should discuss the best scenario. The reviewer should also take into consideration the use of e-learning materials offered through Moodle and formative assessment, where appropriate.

16.4 There should be a meeting (face-to-face or virtual) in advance of the review session to discuss the learning objectives of the session and to provide the Reviewer with any materials that the student will receive (including programme handbooks, where appropriate).

17. Evaluation

17.1 To ensure annual oversight of the Peer Review system, in time for summary reporting to assist in annual monitoring procedures, the April Education Committee meeting will receive the first report from the coordinator.

17.2 Education Committee will discuss themes and issues of the process, and report to next Academic Board and Executive Committee in the Spring.

18. Documentation

18.1 To assist with structuring the above process, templates are provided (see Appendix).

A. Pre-review discussion form
B. Reviewer’s comment form
C. Reviewee’s reflective notes
D. Record of session form

18.2 Please note that there are two Reviewer’s comment forms. Decisions about which form to use and how they may be modified to fit the purpose should be part of the pre-review discussion. It is important to consider the type of session to be observed, the relevant outcomes, processes and teaching skills.

19. Record-keeping

19.1 The focus of this process is primarily formative and developmental, so records should be kept by the Reviewee as part of their professional development profile.

19.2 It is the responsibility of the Reviewee to act on professional development needs arising from the review event.

19.3 As part of the de-briefing stage of the review, Reviewee and Reviewer should complete the Record of session form. This document will be sent to the coordinator in charge of this peer process and a summary of each review is forwarded to the relevant Head of Programme.

20. Procedure

20.1 Ideally this activity should allow for:
• Pre-review meeting between Reviewer and Reviewee, 15-30 min
• Observation of the nominated session, 50-60 min
• Feedback after the session, 20-30 min

20.2 The observation should take place at an appropriate time for all parties, not when students are just beginning or finishing a course. The lecturer should decide which session should be observed and what they would like to discuss in the pre-review meeting.

20.3 If possible, the pre-review meeting should occur 1-2 days before the observed session so there is time to consider all elements of the process. The process should build in time immediately after the session for feedback and collegial discussion.

Step 1: Pre-Review meeting

20.4 It is important that the Reviewee and Reviewer take time to discuss the elements given below so that the Reviewer is fully aware of the situation they are to observe. This discussion also allows the lecturer (tutor) to explain the context of the teaching, including the type and length of the session, aims, outcomes and subject, aspects of design, etc. and to sketch out any new initiatives or changes that they may have made. It is preferable to meet face-to-face (in room or on-line) for this discussion, to at least have a conversation about the following:

• Time and place of observation and feedback
• Type and length of the session (e.g. workshop, seminar etc.)
• Level and background of the students
• Content and its context within the curriculum
• Aims and outcomes of the session
• Potential difficulties or areas of concern

• Any concerns of the Reviewer
• Relevant aspects to be observed.

Step 2: The Review

20.5 The students should be informed about the observation in advance so they know that the purpose of the observation is to assist the professional development of the Lecturer (tutor) and that the Reviewer will not participate in the session.

20.6 On the day, the Tutor should simply acknowledge the presence of the Reviewer and continue to work effectively with trainees ignoring the presence of the Reviewer.

20.7 The Reviewer should be well briefed after the pre-review discussion, so that they know:

• The aims and outcomes of the session
• The context and content of the curriculum
• Which aspects the lecturer wants to have comments on.

20.8 The Reviewer then proceeds to:

• Observe against elements or criteria agreed in initial discussions with the lecturer
• Sit discretely where they are not in line of vision for the lecturer or the group but is able to see the lecturer and the students. The Reviewer should not participate in the session
• Focus on the learning and teaching process rather than the content of the session
• Carefully observe methodologies, including responses and processes
• Note the achievement of aims
• Note areas of successful and less successful achievement in the session

Step 3: Feedback or de-briefing

20.9 It is important to begin this stage with the opportunity for the lecturer to reflect on their own practice. A good starting point is for the lecturer to consider what was happening, what went well with the session, and, perhaps with the help of the Reviewer, to acknowledge all the positive aspects of the learning situation. This is an excellent opportunity to identify good practice for sharing with other colleagues. The Reviewer may then describe what was observed, giving relevant positive statements about skill, insight, competence, etc., and seek a responsive conversation to explore these concepts in more depth. At a later point, the Reviewer should then identify what did not seem to be so successful or what appeared to be areas of difficulty. The Reviewee should be invited to reflect on these comments and to engage in further constructive dialogue. The Reviewer acts as a facilitator to this reflective process by listening carefully, responding professionally and/or asking questions to prompt deeper reflection.

20.10 Included here are points for discussion in the pre-review session and suggested questions which might prompt a reflective conversation during the post-observation/review and feedback session.

20.11 For example, the Reviewer might ask, as appropriate:

- What were you trying to achieve at this point?
- Could you have achieved your aims another way?
- What was the student involvement here?
- How might you have got some/more interaction going?
- At what points were students having to think?
- How does this relate to students' previous knowledge/experience?
- How could you check whether that objective had been met?
- What were you most pleased about?

20.12 It might also be helpful to invite the lecturer to identify alternative approaches in areas that were not so successful. Both Reviewer and Reviewee should concentrate on process not content, listen actively to each other and engage in reflective dialogue. At the end the Reviewee is invited to identify alternative strategies for the future, any relevant staff development needs and a course of action. Both parties complete the Record of Session form.