Peer Review: “What happens when two early career researchers do peer review”

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ECR Peer Review Process

1. Expression of Interest
2. Preparation Meeting
3. Sharing of unit content/class expectations
4. Consult (Oral)
5. Consult (written)
6. Research and Professional Development Discussion
7. Undertake Peer Review

The process is cyclical, allowing for feedback and continuous improvement.
Expression of Interest

• Searching for support as a new member of staff, teaching in a new environment (Flipped Classrooms)

• To receive constructive feedback on my teaching style and content accessibility

• Create another resource to assess/understand my teaching practices (in conjunction with Student Feedback)

• An opportunity to promote collegial atmosphere amongst other new or ECR staff.

• Collaborate with a peer to develop academic scholarship in regards to higher education teaching.
Preparation Meeting

- Original meeting was scheduled between Peer and a Curriculum Advisor 2 weeks before first peer observation.

- Prior to this meeting all parties agreed to read/share background (mostly academic) information on peer review.

- Using the proposed self-review guide and other WSU resources all three parties discussed the goals and objectives of what we understood to be the peer review process.

- Exchanged ideas about what we understood to be a successful workshop in regards to content and student engagement.

- Discussed strategies for how the ‘reviewer’ would be introduced to students in the classroom.
Sharing Unit Content/Class expectations

- Both ECR’s shared their resources for the week.
- Peer review “beyond the classroom” (broader knowledge of curriculum being taught by our colleagues)
Undertaking Peer Review

**What was being reviewed**

- Content Knowledge
- Class Organisation/Presentation of materials
- Student participation in activities
- Teacher-Student Interactions
- Student-Student Interactions

**How**

- Modifying a pre and during class “check list”
- Additionally, taking “free” notes in class from observations in class
Consultation and Debrief: Oral (Immediately After Peer-Review) and Written

4 Key Themes Emerged Following the Observation

1) Discussion of teaching strategies (for different types of students) in a positive and supportive way.

For example:

“It must be hard at times motivating students with a class so late in the afternoon, I liked how you started with a pretty controversial video to set the scene and grab their attention”

“Given the students have the assessment due this week, I thought the free writing time was an excellent idea!”

2) How we “worked the room” (particularly challenging in a large flipped classroom)

For example:

“You used the space well moving around the large room. This is something I have seen many senior academics struggle with so is a credit to you and your enthusiasm”

“You moved around the room and checked in on each group, giving students time to ask questions of you and discuss their understanding of the reading. I think this worked well considering the reading appeared challenging for some students”
Consultation and Debrief: Oral (Immediately After Peer-Review) and Written

3) Effectiveness of the types of activities (mode of learning) promoted within the workshop

*For example:*

“I thought you could have had another type of activity (like a debate or 3 minute pitch) to enable for more rich collaborative engagement. Also, I noticed a student coming in late who sat on their own and didn’t engage with any other student the entire lesson- maybe something to watch out for!”

“Perhaps, given how interested the students were in this topic an opportunity for groups to present back to the rest of class would have sparked a rich debate”.

4) Depth of Learning (challenging students)

*For example:*

“I think there was scope in this weeks workshops to push the students more in some of the activities to think more critically to demonstrate those higher level graduate level outcomes”.

“I think the students really appreciated having time to reflect on their work. I feel like we throw content at them, so giving them some time to reflect on the conceptual framework I thought provided depth moreso than width of this content in this session”.
Research and Professional Development Discussion

What’s good for research is good for teaching and vice versa.
Overall Benefits and Limitations of this Approach to Peer Review

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• Feedback on teaching for developmental purposes
• Affirmation of good teaching practices
• Broader knowledge of the curriculum taught by our colleagues
• Improved relationships with colleagues
• Opportunities to develop academic scholarship in regards to higher education teaching
• A peer would traditionally be another teaching member of the department – with breath and experience or seniority. This approach promotes two-way collaborative learning and reflection more so than in the traditional format.

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• Heavy workloads and limited time (requires more than one observation!)
• Lack of confidence in the collegiality (overly judgmental process)
• Assuming a collective responsibility for teaching
• Using the “check list” only prioritises a very structured workshop program (the form encourages a lot of inputs but does not provide scope to reflect on the outputs).
• Personal relationships between reviewers and those being reviewed can create either hyper- or hypo-critical approaches to evaluation.
Thank you