Document Title	Peer Review of Teaching Staff
Policy Area	Area 4: Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
Document Code (version #)	QAP4-2 (V3.2)
Applies to	☐ All ☒ Specific *(Teaching Staff)*
	☒ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☐ Staff and Learners

Document Owner	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
Approved by	Academic Council

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Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	This policy has been designed with due regard to the following: - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), et. al (2015), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - Topic-Specific Guidelines for Blended and Fully Online Learning Programmes (2023), QQI

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1. PURPOSE

This document outlines the purpose, scope, benefits and process by which Peer Observation of Teaching (hereafter POT) is implemented within SQT. It is primarily oriented towards the improvement of teaching and is a critical part of instructional mentorship and development. It complements the information gathered as part of the learner feedback process.

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

Peer review of teaching was introduced at SQT for the following cohorts of Tutors with effect from 1st January 2018:

- All new Tutors recruited are required to participate in a peer review session within 6 months of commencement of training - **mandatory**

- A POT may be organised in the case of adverse course feedback. This is determined by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs in consultation with the relevant Training Partner **– mandatory**

- Any Tutor can request a POT session. This process is managed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs who works with the relevant Training Partner to plan the POT session – **voluntarily**

3. RESPONSIBILITY

- The Training Partner Manager is responsible for:
    - ensuring that Peer Review of Teaching sessions are conducted as set out in the scope above
    - ensuring that specific developmental requirements are converted into appropriate staff developmental plans and for implementation of same.
- The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

4. POLICY

The peer review system is a supportive process to assist Tutors to discover and explore different approaches to teaching within their specific discipline, using the structured assistance of a trusted peer (observer). The process should be used for formative purposes with a view to promoting personal development, generating discussion and enhancement around teaching and learning. It also forges collegial relationships amongst Tutors, specifically those teaching within similar subject areas. The overall aim of the process is to enhance student learning by continuously improving the teaching process.

The process must include direct observation of teaching activities (in a physical or virtual setting). However, it may also involve a review of documentation (e.g. exam questions, new programme design etc.) or an open discussion of any aspect of teaching and learning. The observer should be able to provide insights on the delivery of material, the student experience, and other important teaching related factors including clarity, pace, learning outcomes, ideas and suggestions.

All peer review exercises should culminate in a reflective, collegial dialogue between both the Tutor and the observer. Depending on the outcome of the review, the Peer Observer and Tutor may agree to carry out a further observation session within an agreed timeframe.

5. PROCEDURE FOR PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING STAFF

There are two forms which should be completed during the process:

- The Tutor should complete the **Teaching Observation Self – Assessment Form (F31)** which serves three purposes:
  - o as the basis for the pre-observation discussion with the observer.
  - o as a prompt for reflection on the discussion following the observation
  - o and to record action points.
- The observer should complete the **Peer Review Observation Form (F32)** during the teaching session.

To ensure privacy and integrity of the process, these forms should be accessible and maintained by the Tutor and observer only.

A short summary report which includes the date of the observation, the course, reviewer, and reviewee together with a summary of key actions is provided to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs within one week of the review taking place. This feedback is also used to inform continuous review and improvement of the process.

The process for Peer Review of Teaching involves 3 stages as follows:

- Stage 1: Initial briefing
- Stage 2: Observation
- Stage 3: Debriefing

5.1. Stage 1: Initial Briefing

The initial briefing establishes the ground rules and practical matters associated with the planned observation.

Examples of items to be discussed and agreed at the initial briefing include:

- Learning objectives of the selected session.
- Specific items that the Tutor would particularly like feedback on (if applicable).
- Any new or experimental parts of the session, where feedback may be valuable.

- Levels of engagement with learners.

- How the observation will be explained to learners - the Tutor should introduce the observer to the learners and explain the observation process. Thereafter, the observation should have no impact upon the session.

- A time/date for the debrief meeting (ideally this should happen as soon as possible after the teaching session).

A summary of what was decided should be sent by the Tutor to the observer following the discussion. The observer must be a peer subject matter expert or / a training expert (generally the Programme Leader). [1] The Tutor agrees on a suitable session for observation. The observation should take place for at least one hour or enough time to review at least one element of the curriculum. Both should be available for a discussion soon after the observation takes place (ideally immediately afterwards).

5.2. **Stage 2: Teaching Observation**

There are four stages in the teaching process which can be identified in any teaching session as follows:

- Planning prior to the session
- Introducing the session
- Delivering and developing the session
- Conclusion

Prompts and analysis for each of these stages are set out in the **Peer Review Observation Form** (F32) which is completed by the observer during the teaching session.

5.3. **Stage 3: Debrief**

A debrief allows an opportunity for both parties to discuss how the session went as well as an opportunity to provide possible suggestions on how the session could be improved upon (if any). The **Teaching Observation Self – Assessment Form** (F31) should be finalised at this stage of the process.

6. OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS

6.1. **Record Keeping**

1. As part of the Peer Review exercise, the Tutor and Observer should complete the written records of the process (F31 and F32) as per the above.

2. The Tutor and Observer should complete a joint written statement which should be submitted to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and Training Partner Manager. The following items should be recorded on this statement:

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[1] External subject matter experts may be engaged to perform reviews in cases where a peer subject matter expert in not available within SQT.

- *Date of Review*

- *Tutor Name*

- *Observer Name*

- *Focus / Scope of Peer Review*

- *Example of Good Practice Noted*

- *Actions Agreed (incl. timeline of follow-up review if applicable)*

- *Unresolved Difficulties (if any)*

6.2. Action Plan and Developmental Requirements

1. The Observer and Tutor should identify ways in which the session / practices / materials reviewed may be enhanced or improved. A constructive dialogue between the Observer and Tutor may lead to an action plan for personal development and/or an agreement to carry out a further Peer Review of Teaching session.

2. Specific developmental requirements should be converted into appropriate staff developmental plans as per QAP4-4: Professional Development of Teaching Staff, which is the responsibility of the Training Partner Manager with oversight from the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

6.3. Improvement of Poor Performance in Teaching

1. SQT will endeavour to provide the opportunity for the improvement of poor performance through mentoring and continuous review.

2. Should the Tutor continue to demonstrate ineffective teaching duties, procedures will be put in place to remove them from SQT's teaching staff as per QAP4-3: Monitoring the Effectiveness of Teaching Staff.

7. POLICY MONITORING

Responsibility	Frequency	Methods
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs – Document Update	Per QA audit schedule	- Review of documentation as set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Annual	- Minutes of Programme Board meetings. - Feedback from those who have been involved in the peer review process. - Learner feedback regarding the effectiveness of teaching.

8. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No	Approval Date	Description of Revision	Originator	Approved By
2.0	14/12/18	Policy and procedure updated to specify summary information to be provided to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and allow for peer reviews to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified peer (rather than a senior peer).	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council
3.0	7/6/19	Policy and procedure updated to consider HR considerations, as well as oversight of procedure, and the potential outcomes and actions of the process.	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council

| 3.1 | 8/12/21 | Policy updated to incorporate reference to virtual training i.e. removal of classroom specific references. | Director of Quality and Academic Affairs | NA |
| 3.2 | 17/7/24 | Policy updated to remove reference to NEBOSH | Director of Quality and Academic Affairs | NA |