

# Peer Teaching Observation – Introduction



TECHNISCHE  
UNIVERSITÄT  
DARMSTADT

**HDA**  
Hochschuldidaktische  
Arbeitsstelle

Preparation, Implementation and Documentation

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## 1 Aims and benefits of the peer teaching observation

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The peer teaching observation (mutual counselling of university courses) is a very important and effective instrument of staff development in higher education. University teachers can improve their own teaching competence, develop an individual teaching style, and train the self-perception and awareness of others. It should motivate them to improve themselves further on an ongoing basis. The exchange of experience among colleagues is also a very important issue. Both colleagues receive constructive feedback, if desired a video recording, an overall reflection of the course, and valuable suggestions for improvement of their own teaching. Also, they can compare their self-perception with an external evaluation. This evaluation ideally complements the students' views with an additional perspective.

An important note:

The exchanged information and observations among you remain confidential!

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## 2 Procedural overview

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<b>1. Design of your course session (university teacher)</b> <i>Sheet course planning (to fill out)</i>
<b>2. Preliminary talk</b> Discuss the course planning & clarify individual concerns Recording (with camera)? <i>Sheet course planning (bring already filled out)</i>
<b>3. Implementation – Visit to the course</b> <i>History log (6-8 blank pages bring with you)</i>
<b>4. Quick feedback (directly after the course)</b> <i>Quick feedback sheet</i> <i>Feedback rules</i>
<b>5. Evaluation of the course session (separate)</b> <i>University teacher – Self evaluation</i> <i>Observer – External evaluation</i>
<b>6. Feedback conversation</b> Comparison of self and external evaluation, reflection of strengths and weaknesses, development of options for improvement <i>Detailed sheets for self and external evaluation</i> <i>Feedback rules</i>
<b>7. Documentation of teaching observation – personal summary</b> What do you take with you? What were you encouraged in? What was new? What would you like to try out? <i>Sheets for personal summary</i>
<b>8. Submit documents (from the university teacher who was observed)</b> <i>Sheet for personal summary</i> <i>Self and external evaluation (optional)</i>

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## 2 Procedure of the teaching observation

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### 1. Preparation of the teaching observation

University teacher and observer agree on a date for the teaching observation. The university teacher sends the planning sheet filled out as well as the sheet “My experience and my questions” to the observer by e-mail (about one week before the teaching observation). The planning sheet and the sheet for recording the consultation were handed out together with these documents or sent to you by e-mail. Before the teaching observation, we recommend a short meeting or telephone call, so that the university teacher and the observer can discuss the planning and the questions. There may be certain concerns of the lecturer to which the observer should pay attention. Please clarify whether the event should be video recorded or not, as this can be very useful for the evaluation.

### 2. Implementation of the teaching observation

The university teacher performs his/her course in the planned and usual manner. Please be authentic! The teaching observation is not a control or an examination, just an observation. After a short time, you will probably no longer notice the observer, like the most of the university teachers who have already been observed. Before the beginning of the course, students should be informed about the teaching observation and about the reasons and benefits for you as university teacher. An announcement may not be necessary in very large courses, because the observer is not noticed in the mass.

For the observer, we recommend that you should be on site 15 minutes before the beginning of the course, to find a suitable place for the teaching observation, and so that you can keep the university teacher and the students in sight. If you take a video recording of the course, set up the camera and check the position the camera. (Remember to bring an extension cable and a tripod!) The observer should bring 6-8 blank pages of the printed history log to make notes during the observation. Pencils in two colours are helpful, for distinguishing the observation from your own comments. Also, make yourself familiar with the criteria on the observation sheet in advance, so that you can pay attention to everything on which you will give feedback later.

### 3. Short feedback and evaluation meetings

Immediately after observing the class, you will exchange your first impressions. This should always begin with the teacher him/herself. Please use the short feedback form, which you will find in the documents for observers. Do not go into detail - five minutes is enough. Then make an appointment for the evaluation meeting within the next few days.

Evaluate the online materials and the classroom session separately using the criteria on the observation form, the progress report and the recording (if available).

Then hold the evaluation meeting. Again, the teacher should first describe his/her impressions, then listen to the feedback and summarize any points of interest. Please observe the feedback rules below.

### 4. Documentation

As proof of the collegial teaching observation, we require the submission of your personal summary for the teaching observation. For purposes of documentation, this report is filed at the HDA but is not passed on to third parties. The results of the teaching observation are confidential. We would be pleased if you could also submit the two feedback sheets (self- and external evaluation), but this is optional. You do not need to submit the detailed feedback sheets, but you can.

**Important** is that the university teacher (not the observer!) submits the documents (self- and external evaluation as well as the resume) to the HDA.

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### 3 Feedback rules

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As the university teacher, please bring the detailed sheets for self-evaluation filled out to the feedback conversation.

To make the feedback effective and acceptable for the recipient, we recommend following these feedback rules.

It's a good idea for the university teacher to describe first his or her impression of the course, listen to the feedback second, and at the end, to sum up what he or she learned for himself or herself.

#### **Giving Feedback:**

The sender/giver of feedback should...

- establish a frame of esteem by first providing positive feedback, then negative feedback.
- describe concrete examples of behaviour and not judge or criticize in a sweeping way.

For example, do not say "Your handout was a disgrace." But rather: "Your handout contains a lot of text. There is no stimulating material, i.e. no graphs and no images."

- describe his/her own reactions (I-messages instead of you-messages).

For example, „You did not look at me while speaking; thus I did not feel addressed at all.“ „The handout contains neither graphs nor images. Therefore, I have trouble seeing the connections.“

- express a wish or make a suggestion of how to improve.

E.g. „It would be easier for me to follow, if you took more pauses while speaking. “

- Do not list deficiencies, but suggestions for improvement.
- Do not require any changes!

#### **Receiving Feedback**

The recipient of feedback should...

- ... listen to the feedback; try to understand the giver's message.
- ... not search for counterarguments, not justify or defend themselves, and not make excuses.
- ... try to accept the giver's subjective impressions.
- ... see that feedback is a challenge and a gift. Not every gift is to one's taste, but it is impolite to discuss its meaning. Therefore, take it home and think about it in peace. Decide later what you want to do with it: what you want to take with you and what you want to implement.
- ... thank the observer and decide which feedback is useable, e.g. "Thank you very much! I'll think about the suggestions!"

**We wish you lots of fun and valuable feedback!**