**University of Northampton Code of Practice –Peer and Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching**

**1 Introduction**

This code sets out the University of Northampton scheme for Peer and Collaborative Observation and reflects the University’s commitment to assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience and to providing developmental opportunities for teaching enhancement; the Peer and Collaborative Observation of Learning and Teaching process is one element.

Peer and Collaborative Observation of Learning and Teaching is part of the University’s CPD Framework for staff involved in teaching and supporting learning, C@N-DO. The focus of collaborative observation activities within the scheme is developmental enhancement. The underpinning principle is that both the person observing, (the observer) and the person being observed (the observee) can benefit from the process and the aim is to provide opportunities for staff to collaborate in reflection, discussion and further development of their professional practice.

**2 Scope**

This code applies to all University staff undertaking teaching and learning support in any form, including staff engaged in providing staff development activities for colleagues. The principles should be applied appropriately given the nature and extent of each activity.

The code applies to the full range of activities involved in teaching and supporting learning at all levels, for example:

• Observation of classroom teaching or other development activity such as staff training or practical demonstration with students

• Observation of online teaching, staff development and/or learner support, including within distance learning

• Co-teaching activity, where more than one member of staff has been involved in the planning and delivery of teaching and learning activity

• Activity which involves an advisory role, which may include in-house staff mentor activity or ‘professional tutor’ roles where liaison with other external professionals is required e.g. health/education

• Observation of other activity related to teaching – preparation / assessment / feedback / moderation activity

**3 Principles**

**3i** Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching is a peer based, collaborative, non-judgmental scheme designed to provide opportunities for participants to enhance the learning experience of their students and to reflect on and develop aspects of their own professional practice. The scheme recognises that all participants, whether observing or being observed, benefit from the process.

**3ii** The scope of the code includes the full range of activities involved in teaching and supporting learning. Therefore it is expected that observation will not be limited to teaching in the classroom but may also embrace online activities, supervision, field work, tutorial groups, written feedback to students and clarity of assessment tasks. Staff are encouraged to think creatively about how ‘observation’ may be expanded to facilitate peer support for the enhancement of the full range of teaching activities.

**3iii** In all instances it is recognised that formal observation of teaching is a valuable strategy to meet the enhancement objectives listed earlier. There should also be a recognition that observing is not a ‘neutral process’ and some formal discussion of observation goals, context, teaching aims, teaching and observation methods and observer objectivity is required, both before and after the actual observation.

**3iiia.** For observation of online activity, discussion of observation goals and context should include clear guidance advising the online observer where to look e.g. which forum or wiki.

**3iiib.** Where observation of assessment occurs within this scheme, the related discussion should be comprehensive and include such processes as second marking and moderation.

**3iiic.** The process should involve pairs or groups of up to four members, which may be formed either within or beyond departmental and disciplinary boundaries.

**3iv.** External perspectives are strongly encouraged in order to facilitate the exchange of effective practice, broaden awareness and understanding of different approaches to learning and teaching and enable mutual exploration of teaching and learning issues which transcend School and disciplinary boundaries. Examples may include cross-School and cross-disciplinary observations, work- or practice-based activity, observations carried out by an observer who may be external to the institution.

**3v.** Ethical practice requires that the rights of both staff and students are respected in any observation activity; observer and observee shouldnegotiate the context of observation as part of the preparatory discussion, and students should be informed when observation is taking place; with respect to 1:1 teaching (for example tutorials), consent of students must be sought in advance.

**3vi.** All those whose annual teaching or supporting learning load exceeds 20 contact hours per year are expected to participate in the scheme: as part of their development towards recognition or maintenance of good standing as Fellows of the HEA and learning gained from participation will be noted as part of the annual PDR process: The expectations are that:

* each full-time member of staff will participate in the scheme, as observer or observee, a minimum of once in each academic year
* each part-time member of staff will participate in the scheme in accordance with a schedule agreed with their head of department/line manager and which reflects the extent of their teaching commitment
* all staff have their practice observed no less than once in every two years.

**4 Responsibilities**

**4i.** The University’s Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process involves three stages which should be followed: Preparation for Observation, Observation and Discussion and Action Planning.

**4ii.** Each participating member of staff is responsible for identifying the pair or group they will work with. In planning their engagement with the scheme staff are expected to ensure that they engage with different people in forming their peer support pairs /groups in consecutive years, in order to maximise the scope for development and enhancement through a breadth of the shared experience. Working in a pair or group over a period of two years may provide staff with the opportunity to engage in a supported cycle of reflection, action and evaluation, however, staff are expected to work in different pairs/ groups every two years.

**4iii.** The Institute for Learning and Teaching is responsible for ensuring through the CPD Scheme C@N-DO that appropriate staff development opportunities are available to ensure that staff can gain maximum benefit from engagement with the Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching scheme. This will support engagement both as observers and observees.

**4iv.**Each participating member of staff is responsible for including a record of learning and development gained through engagement in the Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process within their annual PDR submission.

**4v.** The line manager is responsible for ensuring through the PDR process that eligible members of staff engage with the Code of Practice.

**5 Process**

**5i.** The University’s Peer and Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process involves three stages which should be followed: Preparation for Observation, Observation and Discussion and Action Planning.

**5ii.** Pro-forma have been provided to facilitate planning and reflection during the Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process. These pro-forma are available via Annexe 1. Participants should complete the pro-forma and may wish keep them for their own records as part of their professional development.

**5iii** In preparing for the observation,it must be ensured that:

**•** both observers and observees have familiarised themselves with the principles and conduct of observation from this code of practice

• observees have identified and explained the main issues for observation and feedback, the teaching aims and methods

• both observers and observees have agreed the context to be observed and form of feedback to be used

**•** observers and observees have agreed how the observer’s presence in the session will be explained to students

• observers and observees have arranged a time and place for as soon as possible after the observation for Discussion and Action Planning.

**5iv.** During the observation it must be ensured that:

* The observation and note-taking or recording should be driven by the agenda identified as part of the planning process
* Observers should conduct the observation as agreed, with respect to the observee and students, be unobtrusive, and not intervene in the session unless invited to do so by the observee

**5v.** Post-Observation Discussion and Action Planning should include:

**•** Discussions following observation that cover the agenda agreed at the planning stage.

**•** Beginning with a self-evaluation of the session by the observee unless s/he chooses otherwise

**•** Observer comments made in the spirit of an exchange between equals

**•** Both observer’s and observee’s discussion of what each has learned from the process and identifying any areas for action or to be noted as Elements Worthy of Dissemination.

**•** Discussions that establish the ownership and use to be made of records and outcomes from the process, considering opportunities for dissemination of good practice and use of the documents as valuable resources for career development, such as in relation to HEA Fellowship within the CPD Scheme C@N-DO, and to inform PDR discussions.

**5vi.** Confirmation of Process and Elements Worthy of Good Practice:

Each participating member of staff is responsible for including a record of learning and development gained through engagement in the Collaborative Observation for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process within their annual PDR submission.