

## Poster

**Title:**                   **Online Peer Development**

**Presenter:**           **Tamsin Lister, Karen Hamilton**  
Open University

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- discover the potential benefits of using technology in a peer development project conducted in a large distance learning organisation
- understand more about the theoretical background of peer observation and its use as a developmental tool
- discover how peer development can be used to develop teaching practice, develop pedagogies and encourage critical reflection in practitioners
- generate ideas and discussion around peer observation and development across institutions

### **Session Outline**

There are a number of interesting peer observation studies conducted at the OU (Nicolson & Harper, 2013) and in other institutions (Nerantzi 2013; Byrne et al 2010; Gosling 2002) which contribute in many ways to the development of this work.

The focus of peer observation in this context is to support Associate Lecturer (AL) staff in developing their teaching practice through collaborative online activity, with staff 'sharing their insights and providing mutual support' (Bell 2005). This builds on the theory that colleagues can learn from observing teaching and that observing a colleague 'teach' can be, 'just as, if not more, beneficial than receiving well-constructed feedback' (Hendry, Oliver, 2012). The main aim was to learn through observing, not to learn through being observed.

It is widely acknowledged that peer observation is most effective when it covers a broad range of teaching activity, not just one aspect (Gosling, 2009). In this case study, ALs engaged with a broad range of online pedagogies, outlined below:

- 1) Asynchronous tutor group forum Observations
- 2) Recorded OU Live Tutorials: "OU Live" powered by Blackboard Collaborate
- 4) Microteaching (OpenDesignStudio; image-based social web environment)

Microteaching, developed by Allen (1963) is currently used by many Universities to good effect in peer development (Byrne et al, 2010) Participants plan and deliver a 5-10 minute session focusing on one aspect of their teaching practice which is recorded and then

reviewed in a reciprocal arrangement. The content is less important than the planning and approach to teaching.

'Observing others' teaching is a good prompt to re consider your own teaching, particularly when you are exposed to teaching techniques from other disciplines.'  
(Oxford Brookes MOOC, June 2013)

The poster session aims to critique learning design aspects of an online peer development case study and encourage discussion around the effective use of technologies to support collaborative development activity for teaching staff.

## **References**

Byrne, J. Brown, H. Challen, D. (2010) 'Peer Development as an Alternative to Peer Observation: a Tool to Enhance Professional Development' School of Education, Southampton, International Journal for Academic Development

Gosling, D. O'Connor K 'Beyond the Peer Observation of Teaching' SEDA Paper 124 (2009)

Nerantzi, C (2013) 'An Open Peer Observation Experiment within an Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice' Educational Developments Issue 14.1 March, 2013

Nicolson, M & Harper, F (2013) 'Online peer observation: its value in teacher professional development, support & wellbeing' International Journal for Academic Development

Oxford Brookes University MOOC. First Steps into Learning & Teaching in Higher Education: 8 May - 14 June 2013