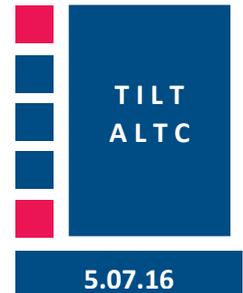


# Transforming learning through Scholarship

## Session Abstract



Developing processes to improve pedagogy in HE ungraded and developmental peer observations of teaching

*Damian Fidler, New College Nottingham*

This session offered ideas, themes and evidence from FE colleges' HE provision, such as NCN, to assert that peer-reviews of teaching (as opposed to formal observations of teaching) are valuable and effective in enhancing pedagogy or inspiring confidence to consider innovative methods and more interactive learning. Elevating analysis of these reviews to appraise practitioners as scholars of teaching (and learning and assessment) is helpful, moreover, in asserting the importance of this development for HE lecturers, who have traditionally taken pride from their subject expertise or production of research – 'scholarship' in more traditional forms (Boyer 1990).

The observation of teaching, particularly in HE levels, is a contested area of quality enhancement (Sachs and Parsell 2014) and is under current, national review as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is developed. The presentation proposed that the most beneficial forms of scrutiny of teaching are Peer observation(s) of teaching (POT) which continue to be ungraded or without precise metrics, as reviews to support, encourage collaboration and reflection by teaching staff away from hierarchical or managerial intrusions (Gosling and O'Conner 2009).

A recent reappraisal at New College Nottingham, including synthesis of almost 60 qualitative peer reviews in HE at NCN will evidence the ways in which staff value opportunities to share, reflect and take advice from colleagues to enhance their Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) independent of metrics or strict criteria to adjudge sessions. Outcomes of this case study were shared to enlighten how effective developmental opportunities can be identified and actioned for the benefit of HE teachers.

Finally, it was argued that to ensure ultimate participation in this process, staff need absolute sense of the importance of their own feedback and assurance that their reviews are considered to collate themes for development. This is part of a dynamic cycle where the peer review of teaching process and guidance continues to be modified and improved, year-on-year, to enhance the ability of staff to support learning.

The discussion of this process was illuminated through use of examples of the qualitative data recorded by reviewers during scrutiny of peers. Although, diverse and lacking absolute uniformity, the richness of extracts will allow main discussion to be grounded in peers' own meaning and understanding they attached to the process as collaborative reviewers. Testimonies and viewpoints from other college HE providers was included to highlight the resonance of this debate in a sector that has become used to a landscape of OFSTED informed observation processes.

### References:

Boyer, E. (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Gosling, D. and O'Conner, K. M. (2009) eds. *Beyond the Peer Observation of Teaching*. London: SEDA.

Sachs, J. and Parsell, M. (2014) eds. The Place of Peer Review in Learning and Teaching, in, *Peer Review of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: International perspectives*. (pp. 1-9). London: Springer.

**Damian Fidler** is currently New College Nottingham's HE Scholarship Development Manager. He has extensive teaching experience in Health and Social Care on all levels in FE and was formerly employed by a Russell Group university as a social survey researcher, following his MSc in Social Science Research Methods at NTU.