Peer review: group activity

Collection: Large group teaching

Resource: Planning and evaluating your lecture

Approximate duration

90 minutes to two hours, including observation of a lecture

Learning outcomes

An ability to decipher and re-frame the lecture as a form, and on this basis to give constructive feedback to colleagues and to oneself.

Introduction

This activity is designed to help PGC participants - or individuals - focus on the often overlooked details of what makes a good (or bad) lecture. It assumes actual attendance at a colleague's lecture, but of course could work with a video as well. It could also provide a basis for self-critique, especially if you have access to the means to have one of your own lectures (or even a short talk) video recorded.

The activity

You need to make use of your professional skills: attentiveness to language, structure, address, style, levels of formality or informality. These notes are meant to constitute 'aids to reflection', not an exhaustive checklist. As with reading a text, a detail may sometimes be as telling as an appreciation of a total structure.

Generally: was there anything that particularly struck you about your colleague's approach? Things where you thought 'I wish I'd thought of that'; or 'I wouldn't have done that'?

- How did the lecturer manage the balance between subject and discourse? How much attention was given to the meta-level? (Connecting things up; pointing forward or backward?)
- The wood and the trees: did you feel the lecturer gave a good model of how to connect detail to a larger argument? How fluently did they move between macro and micro levels?
- How did the lecturer involve the audience? Were students invited, for example, to answer questions? to break off in buzz groups? to do individual pieces of writing?
- What was your sense of audience rapport? How engaged / dis-engaged did students seem? Was there a lot of frantic note taking?
- If the lecturer used technological aids (video, Power Point, etc.), how well was this integrated into the flow of the lecture?
- How did the lecturer cope with things which went wrong? (E.g. late arrivals, students texting, technological breakdowns.)
- Draw an imaginary spectrum: at one end, lecturer with head in notes; at the other, a lecturer striding around, playing the room, improvising. Where did this lecturer fit on the spectrum?

And something else, perhaps easier to deal with in your own case than if engaging with the sensitivities of a colleague. Mannerisms: it is painful to have attention drawn to one's own habitual quirks of expression. And we certainly don't want you to become so aware of them that you become inhibited! But while we are often unaware how frequently we use a phrase or gesture, mannerisms can become irritating to listeners. It is worth watching (or listening to) a recording of yourself to try to isolate what your own personal mannerisms are and whether they have become too obtrusive.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.
http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/

Resources in the *Large group teaching* collection

- Large group teaching: introduction to the collection
- Peer reviewing lectures: resource overview
    - Peer review: A Science of Literature lecture
    - Peer review: Shakespeare's London lecture
    - Peer review: The Odour of Chrysanthemums lecture
- Identifying good and bad practice: resource overview
    - How to give a bad lecture: individual activity
    - How to give a bad lecture: group activity
    - The written and the improvised
- Planning and evaluating your lecture: resource overview
    - The genre of the lecture: individual activity
    - **Peer review: group activity (*you are here)**