

Peer-observation in tutorial courses+

Preparation for the peer-observation

Valuable practical experience and knowledge of one's own strengths can be gained through peer-observation while lecturing a tutorial course. There are two ways:

- Peer-observation: Two tutors attend one or more sessions from each other's courses for a targeted observation and to provide mutual feedback on practical tutoring.
- Observation from an expert: An experienced lecturer attends one or more sessions of the tutorial course and provides feedback on them.

Firstly, there is a (short) preliminary talk, in which the tutor and the peer/expert-observer exchange information on the tutorial course. After that, they reach an agreement on which specific aspects the tutor wants to be the focus of the observation in order to get feedback on them. If desired, they can develop together new strategies or options for action in the future in a follow-up discussion.

How to provide feedback helpfully?

During a peer-observation, the peer or expert-observer provides effective feedback from an "external perspective" by focussing on targeted observations of the teaching practices. This way, the tutor can expand his/her knowledge on the impact of his/her teaching objectives and learn how to handle more consciously with his/her strengths and weaknesses. Both parties need to follow some basic rules, so that feedback is helpful and effective:

The feedback-provider should:

1. differentiate between feelings, remarks and assumptions, and talk only from his/her own perspective (e.g. "I have seen that..."; "My impression on this method was...").
2. be appreciative and motivating, and address not only the positive aspects, but also those in need of improvement.
3. be specific, and focus on the description of the observed situations (e.g. "At the beginning, when you were explaining XY, aspect Z was missing"). In doing so, the observer should be objective and refer which aspects can be implemented in the future.

When taking feedback, you should:

1. listen to the feedback without interruptions or comments, i.e. accept it for what it is – a subjective observation. There is no need to justify, explain or defend yourself.
2. ask questions, if you didn't understand a certain aspect of the feedback.
3. after the feedback, decide for yourself which aspects are helpful for you and you want to apply in the future.

Considerations for the peer-observation

Date: _____ Tutorial course: _____

Name of the tutor: _____

Name of the peer/expert-observer: _____

Feedback on the main points of observation (see list below)

“I liked that...”; “In my opinion, ... is a nice/useful/practical/... approach”

“I noticed that...”; “If I held the course, I would have rather... because...”; “XY was unclear to me...”

Which aspects/topics I observed are useful and I might apply in my own tutorial course?

Reflection for the tutor

What can I take personally from this feedback?

What specific consequences does it have for my tutorial course or activity?

Guidelines for possible main points of observation

For which aspects does the attended tutor especially want to get feedback on?

Introductory phase

- Does the tutor clearly explicit the learning objectives of the tutorial course or session?
- Is the structure of the meeting clear right from the beginning?
- Does the tutor contextualize the session in a meaningful and comprehensible way within the overall conception of the tutorial course?

Working phase

- Does the tutor select appropriate didactic methods related to the contents and objectives of the session?
- Does the tutor provide answers to the students' questions in a constructive way?
- Does the tutor relate the topic of the session to the students' living environment and their daily lives?
- Does the tutor give the students a chance to link the topics of the session with their previous knowledge or experiences?
- Does the tutor make the students aware of the possibility of self-directed learning (e.g. through activating methods, self-instruction phases, etc.)?
- Does the tutor consider the different performance levels and the individual learning progress of the students?
- Does the tutor integrate mistakes constructively in the learning process?
- Does the tutor organize the session with receptive and active phases alternately?
- Does the use of various media and/or different social forms contribute to a diversified work process?
- Does the tutor select appropriate methods and media related to the contents and objectives of the session?
- Does the tutor give proper instructions on the methods and on the individual and group work, which are related to them?
- Does the tutor introduce properly in the plenary session the results of the discussion of each group?
- Are there any guided discussions? If so, how does the tutor moderate them?

More information on our webpage:

<https://www.uni-giessen.de/de/fbz/zentren/hd/beratung>

Final phase

Does the tutor end the session logically and on time?

- Does the tutor provide a summary of the current session and a transition to the next one? —

How the tutor conducts the session – key questions about the character

- Does the tutor appear confident and competent in terms of contents and methods? How?
- Does the tutor succeed in arising the interest of the students for a topic by showing his/her own enthusiasm and commitment?
- Does the tutor keep a balance between distance and closeness?
- Does the tutor ensure a fear-free and supportive learning environment?
- Does the tutor express himself/herself clearly and comprehensibly?
- How does the tutor deal with the difficulties or the different interests of the students?
- Other: