



## CAME Voice/Voix

### Peer Observation of Teaching

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Do you ever find yourself wishing you could get an educational colleague who you admire to watch you on inpatient rounds so that they can give you tips on how you might incorporate some newer techniques into your day to day “on the fly” teaching? Have you ever wanted to get input on your large group teaching (such as Grand Rounds) in order to make it more engaging and effective? If so, then Peer Observation of Teaching might be for you!

As educators, we know that the direct observation of learners is a critical contribution to their learning to be physicians. There have been many studies demonstrating the merits of peer observation and coaching of teachers, while intentional observation has been foundational for the College of Family Physicians of Canada as part of the roll out of their Triple C competency based curriculum, and it is one of the core tenants of Competency by Design now sweeping through Royal College residency programs.

Peer observation is attractive to teachers interested in further developing their competence. When peer observation is structured as a formative learning opportunity teachers perceive it as a helpful and constructive way of improving their teaching. However, there may be resistance if there is a perception that the focus is on summative assessment or appraisal. These concerns can be addressed by clearly stating the intentions for the use of peer observations, and by incorporating them into a peer consultation model founded on principles of mutual benefit. By emphasizing a low risk model of peer observation, it can be more readily seen as an opportunity rather than as a threat.

At McMaster, an interdisciplinary group of educators in the Faculty of Health Sciences has spearheaded an initiative to facilitate the implementation of peer observation of teaching, discussions emphasizing mutual reflection on teaching practice, and elective coaching on teaching techniques. Our intent is to enhance the teaching practice of both observed and observing teachers. Some of the “tools” we are using in this initiative include: strategies and techniques for observer-coach selection; strategies for observing teaching including small group, large group and clinical teaching sessions; guides for pre and post discussions and debriefing; and sample instruments for recording discussions.

All of our materials are available online at:

[http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/facdev/peer\\_coaching\\_observation\\_and\\_mentoring.html](http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/facdev/peer_coaching_observation_and_mentoring.html)

Gosling, D. (Aug, 2002). Models of Peer Observation of Teaching. LTSN Generic Centre. Available at <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/267687499>

Models\_of\_Peer\_Observation\_of\_Teaching Bell, M. (March 2002). Peer observation of teaching in Australia. LTSN Generic Centre Available at [http://www.pu.uu.se/pu-wiki/mediawiki/images/f/fd/CF\\_Australia.pdf](http://www.pu.uu.se/pu-wiki/mediawiki/images/f/fd/CF_Australia.pdf)