1. **Why would people be interested in having a peer observe their teaching?**

   We all know that observing and then discussing what we have seen with our learners is an extremely effective strategy to enhance performance. As teachers, many of us would like to have the opportunity to grow our teaching skills as we work to augment the capabilities of our learners.

2. **What is the difference between the Peer Coaching Model, the Peer Development Model, and the Peer Evaluation Model?**

   These three models of peer observation differ primarily in their purpose. The support materials developed for McMaster Faculty of Health Sciences do NOT address the Peer Evaluation Model and are not designed for summative teacher assessment.

   The **Peer Coaching Model** is directed towards mutual learning, dialogue and reflective practice, and is primarily directed at meeting the needs of the participants. Often peers exchange the roles of observer and observed. This activity may take place as part of a formal program, or can be an informal arrangement between peers.

   The **Peer Development Model** is focused on developing and improving teaching skills and competencies. The observers are generally trained for their role. As in the Peer Coaching Model, the activities may be part of a formal program or can be a less formal arrangement. The Peer Evaluation Model is directed towards performance review, and may be used in quality assurance, or tenure and promotion activities.

   See our **POT Three Model diagram** for more details.

3. **I am confused about the difference between coaching, mentoring and instructing. What is the difference and how does this fit in with the materials in this project?**

   These three activities are frequently confused, particularly because an individual may be acting in all three capacities with the same individual at different times.

   A **coach** is a non-judgmental listener, who asks open-ended questions, and is focused on helping the other reach goals. They offer advice only if the person being coached asks. A coach will be more effective if the relationship is on going, but this is not a required condition.

   A **mentor** functions as a guide and may frequently offer advice and challenge, and may ask leading questions. Mentorship implies a relationship that is long standing.

   An **instructor** provides feedback and suggestions to enhance performance, and has a formal mandate to do so. There is accountability to the educational program for the learner performance.
4. How do I know that this observation is going to be helpful and not embarrassing? Suppose a learner acts up or I do something wrong?

The peer coaches are there to provide a fresh perspective and to learn themselves. The goal is to have an interesting and useful discussion and to exchange ideas. When two people interested in teaching have a chance to discuss a teaching encounter, it can only be stimulating and useful!

5. How can a peer observation be counted for me – or against me – in the Tenure and Promotion process?

If you wish, an official FHS form can be completed and kept by you in your Educational Portfolio. You may use this in the T&P process if you wish. It is totally up to you what you do with it.

6. How can I set up a peer to observe me? Won’t it make everyone feel uncomfortable and unnatural?

There are many ways to set up an observation. The tool kit has been put together to help your program find ways to adapt peer observation and coaching into your context. Once set up, it is much easier and more natural than anyone anticipates.

7. I’m interested in setting up a program for peer observation – what do I need to do to organize this?

It is important that you design a program based on the needs and interests of teachers in your program. Identifying the purpose of such a program is the first step, in order to decide on the most appropriate process. Do you want teachers to discuss teaching strategies, joys, and dilemmas? Or do you want to incorporate feedback on teaching into the process? Please see the Implementation of a Peer Observation of Teaching document for more details.

8. How do I go about identifying a peer to observe me?

You need to consider several factors when identifying an observer. Is the purpose of the activity to have a discussion with another teacher about mutual interests, experiences and dilemmas in your teaching practices? In this case, another teacher with experience in similar teaching encounters and with whom you feel comfortable would be appropriate. Do you wish to receive feedback on your teaching and generate ideas for new approaches? If so, you may wish to identify a teacher whose teaching approaches you admire and wish to emulate. Clarity will help you decide the qualities most desirable in a peer observer. Your program will most likely have suggestions based on the defined purpose of the program.

9. Do peer observers need to be trained?

There are many successful peer observation of teaching programs in which the observers have no particular training other than being teachers themselves. The advantage of untrained observers is having a broader and more diverse pool to draw on. However, trained observers are prepared to facilitate the development of teaching skills and competencies.

For other questions, please contact the Program For Faculty Development – (905) 525-9140, ext. 22954.