Rationale of peer to peer observation

One of the most effective ways to understand and improve our own teaching is by observing others, or by being observed by a trusted colleague and receiving specific feedback from that observation. Analysing and reflecting on this information can be a valuable means of professional growth. The most effective observations are well planned and focused on specific issues. The post observation discussion is critical. A school where peer observation is widely accepted will enjoy an open environment where the professional discussion of teaching is encouraged and supported.

Types of observation
These P2P protocols support observing the learning environment (previously referred to as CORT) and observing curriculum and pedagogy.

Code of Conduct
Observers are expected to uphold the highest professional standards and ensure everyone engaging in this process is treated fairly and with respect.

Observers should:
- Evaluate the lesson objectively.
- Evaluate consistently against the AITSL Teaching Standards and the Contemporary Learning Framework as listed in the observation sheet.
- Base all evaluations on clear and sighted evidence.
- Report honestly, ensuring any feedback is fair and equitable.
- Carry out the work with integrity, treating all those involved with courtesy, respect and sensitivity.
- Endeavour to minimise any stress.
- Act in the best interest of the teacher.
- Maintain a purposeful and productive dialogue, communicating clearly and honestly.
- Respond appropriately to reasonable requests.
- Take prompt and appropriate action to safeguard the health or safety of the observed.

Intention of Peer to Peer (P2P)
- P2P is a process engaged in voluntarily by teachers.
- It is an opportunity to receive guided feedback from a trusted colleague.
- P2P is intended to strengthen the Professional Learning Community by opening up conversation among staff about teaching and learning, student engagement and student outcomes.
- A teacher can be observed as many times as they wish. P2P is not to be regarded as a ‘one off’ exercise. Arrangements will vary from school to school depending on the time of the year and the resources available.
- P2P is not an industrial process and will not form any part of a performance management process.
- The principal’s express and public support for the process will help ensure the success of the exercise as a common practice in the school.
Observation Indicators

- P2P (Curriculum and Pedagogy) form is located on the CLF site.
- P2P (Learning Environment) form is available through the observer.
- The forms will be updated as required. Check the version before using and do not photocopy numbers of the form to store for later use.
- In both processes the indicators are not to be amended by participants.
- The indicators are drawn from the Contemporary Learning Framework (CLF) and the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Teacher Standards.
- Colleagues involved in the process can agree which sections of the indicators are to be observed.

The observer

- Observers are trained and approved by the Catholic Schools Office.
- Only trained and approved observers can conduct observations.
- Observers conduct the post observation session at a mutually convenient time, as close to the observation as possible. Ideally this should be agreed to prior to the observation.
- Feedback should be conducted in a manner consistent with the back page of the observation form.

The observed

- The person being observed enters into the arrangement voluntarily.
- The observation should be conducted over a suitable time, for example 30-50 minutes.
- Before commencing any observation the person being observed should brief the colleague on the nature of the lesson, provide background information on the class and other pertinent matters as necessary.
- If possible, participants should consider using different observers during the year. Ideally different observers should be used each time the process is engaged in.
- The observed teacher can talk about the post observation discussion to others if they wish.
- Is encouraged to use the process to set or review professional goals.

Use of the observation data

- Any written material is not given to any other teacher.
- To gauge the impact of the program the CSO will collect, through the principal, school statistics on the number of observations and the percentage of staff involved in the process. No names or feedback content will be collected.
- The observer will be required to keep a simple record of who was observed, when and what (if any) personal action by the observer was agreed to (sourcing an article or web site for example).
- Completed P2P Observation forms are not to be photocopied by the Observer.

Video option

The use of video in the P2P process is optional and must be agreed to by the teacher. A general statement must be made by the principal in parent publications to alert them to the possibility of their child’s image being captured on film. The message must emphasise the footage is not focusing on the students, is not for use other than by the teacher personally and is part of a significant professional development exercise. All videoing is focused on the teacher restricting images of students to a minimum. Students need to be informed of any videoing of the teacher. The nature of the exercise and the fact it is not directly about them should be made clear. With the teacher’s
permission, the video can be operated by the observer or pre-set to record without the observer present.

Purpose of videoing
- As a tool for self-reflection.
- As a resource to assist with discussion between the participants.
- The teacher may choose not to show the video to the observer but is expected to engage in post videoing discussion.

Video footage
- The footage is owned by the teacher and used only for the express purpose of personal growth and reflection.
- The footage can be securely stored by the teacher and used or referred to only with the permission of the teacher and only for the purpose above.
- While the type of video device is optional any storage must be secure.

Supervision of the process
- The process will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary following feedback from participants.
- Updated forms and supporting information will be located on the CLF site.
- The P2P process will be overseen within the school by the Principal and may be delegated to those trained in its use.

Post observation discussion
- Feedback is considered a powerful tool and should not be engaged in lightly. Persons giving feedback must be aware of the implications of ill-considered or poorly phrased comments to a colleague.
- The P2P form has advice on feedback on the back cover.
- Good feedback requires active listening by the observer. The majority of the talking in a feedback session should be by the teacher and not the observer.
- Training on the preferred process of providing effective feedback will be provided as required to the trained observers.
- The process is intended to be professional, honest, balanced and enriching for both parties. This is a growth exercise for both parties.
- Feedback must include the post observation teacher reflection.

Role of the Principal
- The principal is expected to support the P2P process by making available resources and timetable options for participants.
- Principals should be observed teaching during the year using P2P.
- The principal will not observe teachers using this process. As always, the principal is nonetheless encouraged to be highly visible in classrooms and active in supporting teachers.
- Any performance management process will not use this format.
- The principal should support the trained observers with the process by openly encouraging staff to be involved and by ensuring it can be discussed at appropriate times.

Role of the Leader of Pedagogy
- The LOP should be encouraging staff participation in P2P. Resources are available on the CLF site to assist LOPs in explaining the process to staff.
- Information, resources and communication should allow for the process to be easily conducted without staff misunderstandings that might prevent participation.
Professional development in Peer Observation

- Key staff in each school will be provided with training in the skills of observing lessons and recording information, in suggesting strategies to support all teachers to continuously improve and recognise good/outstanding lessons. The opportunity to practice and refine skills in giving feedback will also be available.