

What can Peer Review of Supervision learn from Peer Review of Teaching?

Nick Grindle

UKCGE Annual Conference, 2-3 July 2026

UCL Higher Education Development &
Support (Arena)



Why am I interested?



I lead UCL's supervisor development and recognition programmes

I also lead UCL's Peer Dialogue scheme

So it was only a matter of time 😊

I'll look at what PRT can tell us about models, engagement, and contexts.

Is Peer Review of Supervision actually a thing?



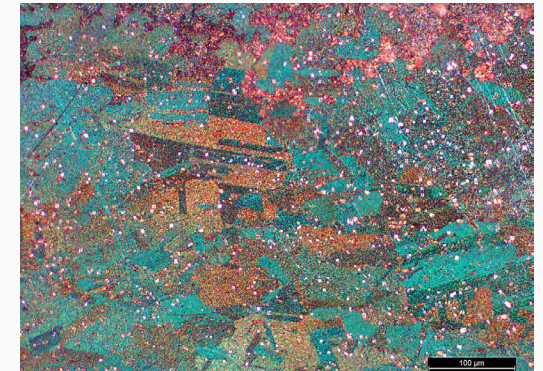
Peer Review of Supervision is emerging as a practice



Part of UKCGE Associate Supervisor award



Cameos in literature



(Short) bibliography at the end

Peer Review of Teaching – definitely a thing!



Long-
established in
HE



Practice is
sector - wide

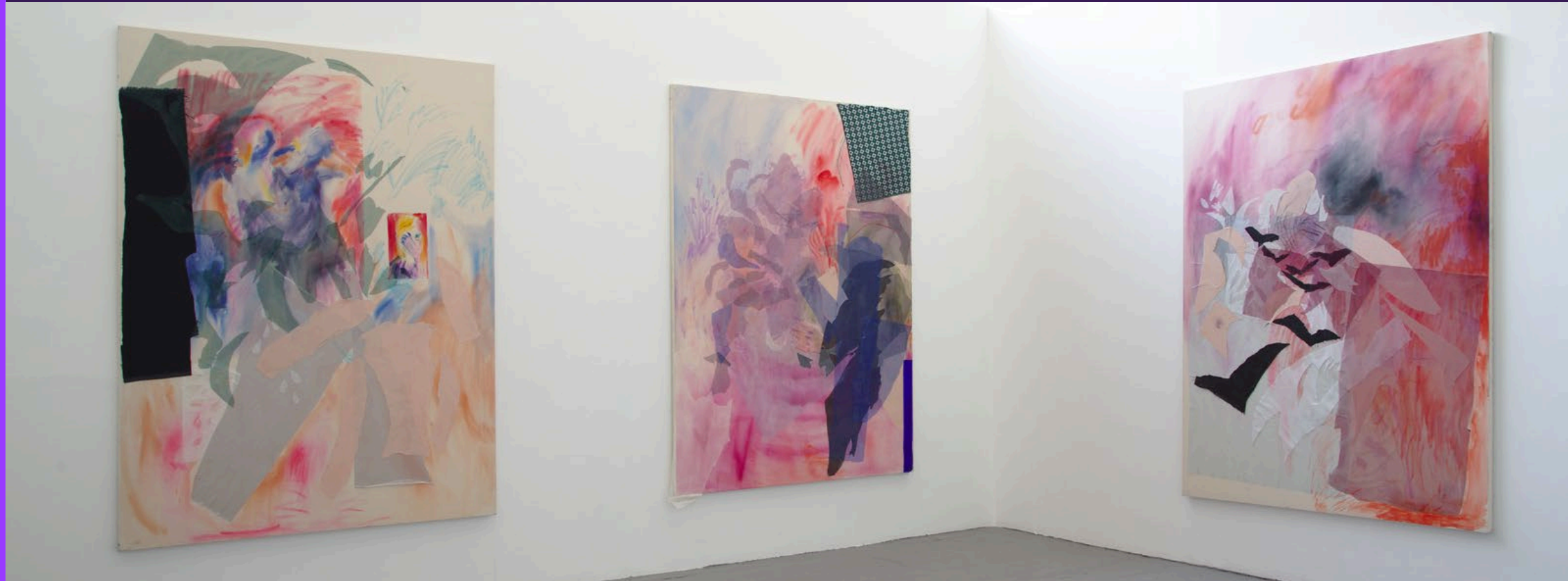


Substantial
research
literature



Most
supervisors will
know it first -
hand

What can we learn from
PRT about which models
work best?



How effective are collaborative - developmental models of peer review?

This is where peers observe each other teaching and give feedback.

It is by far the dominant model in PRT in the UK.

Research shows this model works well in context of research supervision (Byrne et al, 2010 and Wichmann - Hansen et al, 2020).

Peer mentoring circles have a similar rationale.

What about other models of peer review?



The UKCGE approach is to learn by observing rather than being observed.

Multiple sources in PRT literature agree this is effective.

‘I have learned more from being an observer than from being observed’
Smith (2012: 751).

‘The only way to become a truly good supervisor’

‘The idea that supervision practice is best developed by watching other supervisors on the job and through communities of practice was repeated by [focus group] participants [in all categories] – **with some even claiming this to be the only way to become a truly good supervisor**’. (Clegg et al, 2025, see also Hill, 2011).

It’s likely that effective peer review for supervision will need to embrace different approaches.

Peer review is effective when it takes in the whole role



Models with a wider scope are effective – hence ‘review’ rather than ‘observation’. (See Gosling & O’Connor, 2006).

The REF’s focus on People, Culture and Environment opens up multiple fields of practice for review.

What can we learn from
PRT about perceptions
and engagement?



PRT is still perceived as 'compliance'

A persistent view in research literature and commentary (e.g. Shortland, 2004; Osho et al, 2026).

Personal experience shows this colours views about peer review for supervisors.

This is both a threat (if not addressed) and an opportunity (to show we are about development).

Effective PRT is voluntary, collaborative,
and done in cycles.



Provides context for reflection
and personal growth (Shortland,
2004 & many others).



Practice and outcomes vary by
discipline (Hammersley-Fletcher
and Orsmond, 2004).

Peer review can engage staff at all levels – but in different ways



Lots of evidence that PRT often focused on new staff (e.g. 2023 TEF)

More experienced teachers can be engaged if providing advice and feedback.

Supervisors in Byrne's study reported: 'This should feed into how I support inexperienced PhD supervisors in their role' (2020: 225).

What can we learn
about which contexts
nurture good practice?



Limited research comparing peer review across different contexts



There is no research on the effect of recognition and reward on perceptions and engagement in PRT (because the literature is old?).



Wichmann-Hansen et al (2020) and Fosslund (2022) report positive effects of peer review in context of supervisor development programmes.

Professional expertise can nurture good practice in peer review



UK research (e.g. Yiend et al, 2014) and international practice shows benefits of working with trained reviewers.



Opportunity for researcher developers to shape and be involved in peer review of supervision (yay!).

Frameworks and standards make for supportive contexts



PRT has benefitted from well - designed standards and frameworks that offer staff a focus for their development (Pattison, 2012; Clarke et al, 2025).

UKCGE Good Supervisory Practice Framework provides some common language for peer review of supervision.

QA requirements do not make for supportive contexts

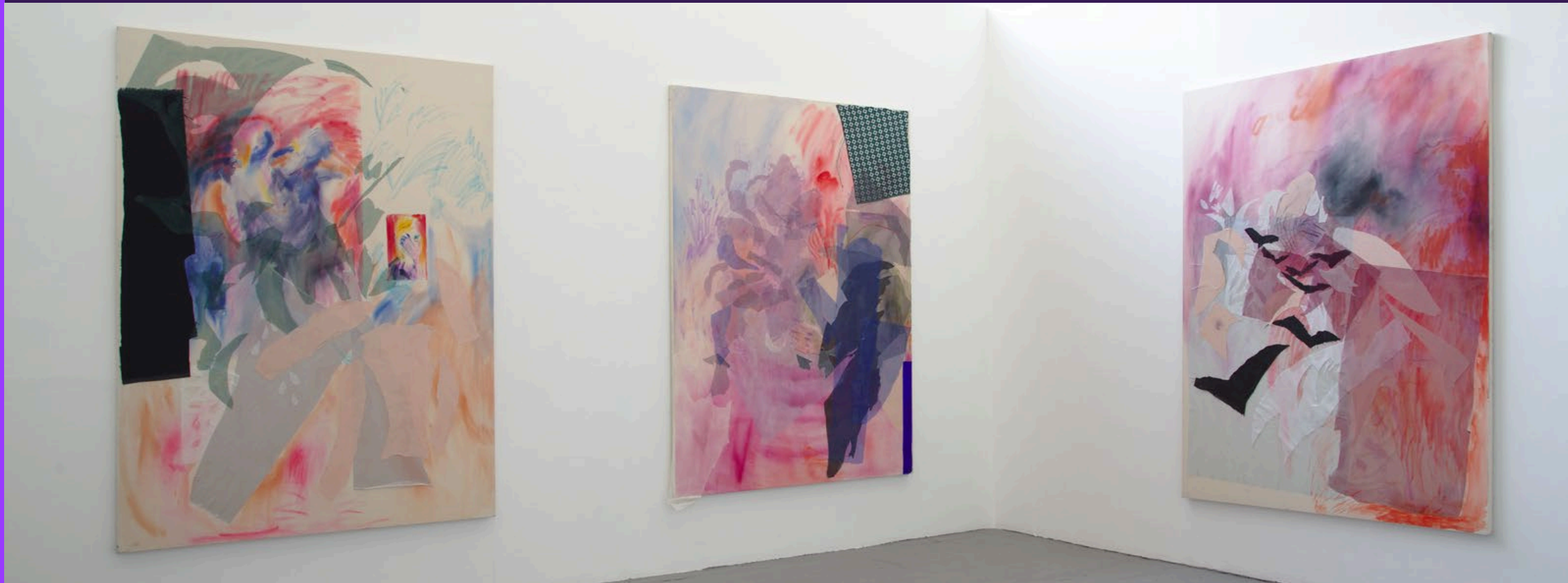


Hopes that the Teaching Excellence Framework would provide a boost to the practice of PRT (Scott et al, 2017) proved unfounded.

Submissions for the 2023 TEF offered no evidence for a healthy PRT culture.

Lessons for the REF here?

Conclusions



Conclusions

1. Research is needed to evidence the value of different models.
2. Need to offer a plurality of models and collaborate across institutions.
3. Practice needs to be 'context - sensitive' (Clarke et al, 2025).

And above all – we must keep talking and trying!

References for peer review of supervision

- Byrne, J., Brown, H., & Challen, D. (2010). Peer Development as an Alternative to Peer Observation: A Tool to Enhance Professional Development [Journal Articles; Reports - Evaluative]. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 15(3), 215 - 228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2010.497685>
- Clegg, K., Quinlan, L., & Palmer, N. (2025, 15 June 2026). Research supervision in the context of REF - time for a step change? *WonkHE Comment*. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/research-supervision-in-the-context-of-ref-time-for-a-step-change/>
- Fossland, T. (2023). Becoming a professional supervisor: Doctoral supervisors' development in a mandatory, large-scale development programme. *Journal of Praxis in Higher Education*, 5(2), 27-52. <https://doi.org/10.47989/kpdc429>
- Hill, G. (2011). Diffracting the Practices of Research Supervision. In V. Kumar & A. Lee (Eds.), *Doctoral Education in International Context: Connecting Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*. Universiti Putra Malaysia Press.
- Wichmann-Hansen, G., Godsken, M., & Kiley, M. (2020). Successful development programs for experienced doctoral supervisors – What does it take? *International Journal for Academic Development*, 25(2), 176-188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2019.1663352>

References for peer review of teaching

- Clarke, S. L., Frawley, J. K., Grindle, N., & Kalman, E. (2026). Contextualising Peer Review of Teaching: Ecological Program Design to Meet Contemporary Challenges. In K. Pechenkina (Ed.), *Design, Delivery, and Evaluation of Professional Learning for University Staff* (pp. 237-274). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-3638-1.ch009>
- Gosling, D., & O'Connor, K. M. (2006). From peer observation of teaching to review of professional practice (RPP): a model for continuing professional development (CPD) [Article]. *Educational Developments*, 7(3), 1-4.
<https://www.seda.ac.uk/seda-publishing/educational-developments/past-issues-2000-onwards/educational-developments-issue-7-3-2006/>
- Grindle, N., Clarke, S., & Frawley, J. (2025, 4 August 2025). Is peer review of teaching stuck in the past? *WonkHE Analysis*. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/is-peer-review-of-teaching-stuck-in-the-past/>
- Hammersley-Fletcher, L., & Orsmond, P. (2004). Evaluating Our Peers: Is Peer Observation a Meaningful Process? [Journal Articles; Reports - Evaluative]. *Studies in Higher Education*, 29(4), 489-503.
<https://doi.org/https://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/link.asp?target=contribution&id=3Q3KXHFTN258BFYU>
- Pattison, A. T., Sherwood, M., Lumsden, C. J., Gale, A., & Markides, M. (2012). Foundation observation of teaching project - a developmental model of peer observation of teaching. In *Medical Teacher* (Vol. 34).
- Scott, M., Tucker, G., Unsworth, J., & Burgum, S. (2017). *Peer Review of Teaching: A Rapid Appraisal*. York: Advance HE.
- Shortland, S. (2004). Peer observation: a tool for staff development or compliance? *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28(2), 219-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877042000206778>
- Smith, H. (2012). The Unintended Consequences of Grading Teaching [Journal Articles; Reports - Evaluative]. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 17(6), 747-754. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.744437>
- Yiend, J., Weller, S., & Kinchin, I. (2014). Peer Observation of Teaching: The Interaction between Peer Review and Developmental Models of Practice [Journal Articles; Reports - Research]. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 38(4), 465-484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2012.726967>