

Teaching Matters

newsletter from the Teaching and Learning Unit

Issue 2, 2008

<http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au>

Welcome to the final issue of *Teaching Matters* for 2008. It has been a busy year for the TLU. During the year we have endeavoured to ensure that the Unit is responsive to our key stakeholders - FEC staff and students. In particular, we have strengthened our commitment to academic staff development with the primary aim of building the capacity of our teaching staff in the Faculty. In 2009 this commitment will continue with the introduction of new programs and activities to complement our existing staff development activities.

We have reviewed our student support activities, which include academic skills development and peer learning, and refined our existing programs to better meet the diverse needs of FEC students.

As always, your feedback and suggestions about the ways that the TLU can further enhance student learning outcomes by providing professional development for staff and academic skills programs for students are always welcome.

TLU will move to levels 4 and 6 of The Spot in 2009. Eventually, we hope to establish our 'new home' in the ICT Building.

In this issue you will read about TLU initiatives undertaken in 2008 and our plans for 2009:

- In 2009 we will launch a new program for academic staff that is focussed on subject design and curriculum renewal. This initiative is aimed at providing academic staff with an opportunity to review and renew their subjects in a scholarly manner.
- The very popular student helpsheets have been revised, ready for use in Semester One, 2009. These resources are widely used by students and often requested by national and international colleagues for use in their own student support activities.
- The TLU's commitment to peer learning continues to grow with our involvement in the new journal titled: *The Australasian Journal of Peer Learning*.
- On February 11 and 12, 2009, the TLU will host a Master Class in Graduate Education. The Master Class will be presented by Professor Harvey Brightman, Regents Professor Emeritus of Decision Sciences at Georgia State University, USA. You can register at http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/contact_us/masterclass_register.html.

Seasons Greetings from all at TLU!

Associate Professor Kim Watty
Director, Teaching and Learning Unit

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A program to support Subject Design and Curriculum Renewal

Teaching well and feeling confident that your students are learning relies on a robust, scholarly and evidence-based approach to subject and curriculum design. Yet when academic staff first start teaching at university, most do not often have the opportunity to learn about subject design, or to learn about the elements of subject design that really make a difference to the quality of student learning. We tend to teach in the way we were taught ourselves, or teach as a reaction against our own experiences of learning as students.

Teaching, like research, is a process of scholarly inquiry. It involves watching others teach, reflecting on teaching experiences, gathering feedback from students and colleagues, reading the educational literature, hypothesising, theorising, thinking hard and then making informed decisions. Teachers, like researchers need to be able to make decisions about their teaching and curriculum based on evidence from a range of sources.

This new TLU program is intended to help you do that. It will introduce you to research and evidence about students' experiences and perceptions of learning to inform the way you go about subject design and curriculum renewal processes. The focus is on encouraging you to develop a scholarly approach to subject design and renewal. The program will help you draw on educational principles to improve the quality of your students' learning.

What does the program involve?

In 2009, the TLU will offer an integrated program of six modules on subject design and curriculum renewal. You will get the most out of the program if you can commit to participating in all six modules because you will take away a more coherent and holistic approach to subject design and renewal. However, it is possible to participate in individual modules.

Semester One dates

Week 2: Wednesday 11 March, 11:00-2:00pm

Why is knowing about student learning important to subject design and curriculum renewal?

Week 4: Wednesday 25 March, 11:00-2:00pm

Why all the fuss about learning outcomes? Their promise and pitfalls

Week 6: Wednesday 8 April, 11:00-2:00pm

Using assessment and feedback to support learning

Week 8: Wednesday 29 April, 11:00-2:00pm

Constructive Alignment: An integrated approach to subject design

Week 10: Wednesday 13 May, 11:00-2:00pm

Utilising technology for learning

Week 12: Wednesday 27 May, 11:00-2:00pm

Beyond the QoTs: additional strategies for evaluating the quality of student learning

To focus and maximise your learning in the program, you will be invited to draw on a specific subject that you are currently responsible for coordinating, or one that you would like to design. This subject will be the context for your learning in the program. You may wish to review or make some changes to it, or simply learn about first principles. You'll be encouraged to experiment with the assessment and the learning activities, and to ask yourself whether the design of the subject provides students with the best opportunity to learn.

Once you have completed the program, you will be able to:

- provide evidence of your professional teaching development
- develop a more sustainable approach to subject design and curriculum renewal that is focused on improving the quality of student learning
- locate and draw on educational research and evidence to underpin your decision making about subject design
- write appropriate learning outcomes for your subject
- apply and evaluate different methods of assessment and feedback to support student learning
- use the LMS in a way that supports student learning in your subject
- seek and respond to feedback from your students in a balanced way
- draw on different methods of subject evaluation to complement the QoT survey data
- diagnose how you can improve your own teaching and your students' learning

You will receive a certificate upon completion of all six modules.

Register for the Semester One program by emailing Sonia Borg (s.borg@unimelb.edu.au) in the TLU. We will send you further details at the beginning of February. For academic inquiries about the program, contact Dr Tai Peseta in the TLU: tpeseta@unimelb.edu.au or 8344 3501.

Tai Peseta

TLU publications in 2008

- Davies, W. M. (2008). Not Quite Right: Teaching Students How to Make Better Arguments. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13(3), 327-340.
- Peseta, T. and Manathunga, C. (2008). The Anxiety of Making Academics Over: Resistance and responsibility in the academic development project. In I. Morley & M. Crouch (Eds.), *The Value of Knowledge: Illumination through Critical Prisms* (pp 79-94). Netherlands: Rodopi Press.
- Watty, K., Bellamy, S. and Morley, C. (2008). Changes in Higher Education and Valuing the Job: The Views of Accounting Academics in Australia. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management*, 30(2), 139-151.

Peer Learning: Strategies to support student learning

Almost everyone has had an experience of peer learning. A conversation with a friend or colleague can help to clarify, extend, challenge or reinforce knowledge and ideas. A conversation is a powerful learning tool.

Peer learning in higher education can be practised in many forms. Students can be matched with peers across years or with those with different skills and abilities. In this instance, peer learning refers primarily to students within the same-year who are engaged in reciprocal learning practices.

Peer learning offers many advantages both for students and the Faculty of Economics and Commerce. As the student population is becoming increasingly diverse and students must manage the time pressures of work, family and social commitments, university study is something students must 'fit in' to their lives. Evaluations of the most enduring peer learning program offered by the TLU, the Peer Assisted Study Scheme (PASS), suggest that students value PASS for two main reasons: the opportunity to collaborate with peers in a relaxed and social environment, and the time efficiency of the study method.

The multiple benefits for students of peer learning practices have been reported in the literature (for example, Sanders, 1992; Topping, 1996; Smith, May and Burke, 2007). The most frequently cited positive experiences of peer learning reported by students relate to the opportunity to clarify learning and assessment expectations, and improve their understanding of academic material. As a consequence, students report an increase in their confidence to discuss knowledge and ideas. Peer learning offers students an opportunity to explore ideas, to speak up when they do not understand the material and an opportunity to receive more frequent feedback.

Peer learning activities offer students new approaches to learning. Students can observe the different approach taken by a peer and learn about new (often fun, collaborative) ways to study, or new ways to conceptualise a problem, or new ways to approach a complex research task. Pragmatic students may divide a large research task amongst themselves and draw motivation from the group process in order to prepare their work more thoroughly. Their commitment to each other can also mean that students complete their work in advance of an external deadline to permit formative peer feedback.

Implementation of a peer learning activity can consume staff time (and may displace another teaching activity) however the following strategies can support positive peer learning outcomes:

- Make explicit the purpose of the activity and the expectations on students. In order to fully participate, students need to be provided with guidelines or basic skills training.
- Include in the peer learning activity a process for managing inter-group dynamics (that can arise from cultural, gender, age differences) within a group.
- A peer learning activity may form part of the overall assessment. A criterion-based assessment structure rather than competitive forms of assessment should incorporate students' participation in the process, as well as the final product of the peer learning activity.
- Where students are contributing to a group project, it may be helpful to provide suggestions regarding management of individuals' contributions and guidelines for perceived and actual comparability of workload.
- Provide guidelines regarding the management of logistics such as: the arrangement of meetings outside class times, recognition of different learning styles, and strategies to accommodate different levels of ability within a group.

How does the TLU support peer learning?

PASS

The Peer Assisted Study Scheme (PASS) provides small subject-specific study groups that are facilitated by a Leader, a senior student who has successfully completed the same subject. The Leaders do not teach content; rather, they utilise a range of peer learning strategies that encourage students to discuss questions, share ideas and revise subject content. The PASS program is presently available in subjects in the Departments of Finance and Accounting and Business Information Systems and is supervised and administered through the TLU.

<http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/students/undergraduate/PASSoverview.html>

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring of commencing students in undergraduate and graduate degrees offers a form of peer learning with a stronger focus on the development of social networks to assist the successful cultural transition of new students to the Faculty. <http://www.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/services/mentor/>

Peer Tutors

The Peer Writing Tutor program and the Peer Maths and Stats Tutor program are drop-in services provided by the TLU for students who seek guidance with basic questions. The program provides a peer learning experience for both the peer tutors and the students who access the service.

http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/students/undergraduate/peer_writing.html

Additional resources:

Sampson, J. Cohen, R. (2001). Designing Peer Learning. In D. Boud, R. Cohen and J. Sampson (eds), *Peer Learning in Higher Education: Learning from and with each other*, London: Kogan Page.

Sanders, D. (1992). Peer Tutoring in Higher Education, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol 17 (2), pp: 211-219.

Smith, J., May, S. and Burke, I (2007). Peer Assisted Learning: A case study into the value to student mentors and mentees, *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Vol.2 (2), pp: 80-109.

Topping, K. (1996). The effectiveness of peer tutoring in further and higher education: A typology and review of the literature, *Higher Education*, Vol. 32 (3), pp: 321-345.

Australasian Journal of Peer Learning

The inaugural issue of the *Australasian Journal of Peer Learning* was launched in September 2008. The Journal is a joint initiative of the University of Wollongong and the Teaching and Learning Unit.

Articles present research outcomes of peer learning through online environments, mentoring as a strategy to improve students' skills, strategies to improve student facilitation skills in peer learning activities, and more.

Email: aj_peerlearning@uow.edu.au

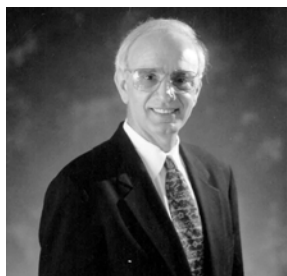
<http://www.uow.edu.au/student/services/pass/publications/UOW051823.html>

Sanchia Draper

Sanchia Draper received the Faculty of Economics and Commerce Professional Staff Scholarship in 2008 to research students' perceptions of peer learning.

The Teaching and Learning Unit presents a two-day *Master Class*
11-12th February 2009

Teaching Graduate Students in Economics and Commerce: Strategies for successful teaching and student learning



Professor Harvey J. Brightman
Regents Professor Emeritus of Decision Science
Georgia State University, USA

The Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Commerce, Professor Maggie Abernethy will introduce the *Master Class*. Participants will then have the opportunity to share ideas and experiences, to learn from each others' practice, and to think about how to design teaching and curriculum to ensure that our graduate students achieve the desired learning outcomes.

DAY ONE

Effective Teacher Attributes and Student Learning Styles

Learn about the critical drivers that affect student learning and student evaluations.

Writing Learning Objectives

Write learning objectives at the rote, meaningful-integrated and critical thinking levels.

Designing Effective Presentations

Design presentation and course diagrams using several organising structures.

Motivating Effective Presentations

Design opening applications or hooks that stimulate interest and show subject relevance.

FOR THE DIARY:

DATE: 11 – 12 February 2009

VENUE: Theatre 3, Alan Gilbert Building

FULL CATERING WILL BE PROVIDED

DAY TWO

Delivering Effective Presentations

Apply the 'Big Five' principles to deliver clear presentations.

Active Learning and Cooperative Groups

Learn how to form and norm effective cooperative groups and have students learn at a higher-learning level.

Case Teaching

Begin by participating in a case discussion. Learn the different ways to run a case discussion.

Designing assessment to improve students' critical thinking skills

Design effective short-answer questions. Learn about the structured white-space method to be more effective and efficient with marking and feedback. Learn to use feedback templates to improve reliability and reduce marking time.

Professor Brightman has extensive teaching experience in undergraduate, graduate and executive education at a number of US and European Universities. He taught the doctoral seminar on university-level teaching at GSU from 1976-2001, and has been the co-director of the Master Teacher Program, a four-day intensive workshop, from 1988-to the present. Over 650 people worldwide have attended. In addition he has presented over 125 teaching and learning workshops worldwide for universities over the past fifteen years. He has published in the fields of problem solving, computer-based model building, decision support systems, and teaching for critical thinking. His books include: *Problem Solving: A Logical and Creative Approach* (1981); *Statistics in Plain English* (1985); *Group Problem Solving: An Improved Managerial Approach* (1988); *Statistics for Business Problem Solving* (1992); and *Data Analysis in Plain English with Excel* (1999). In 1998, Professor Brightman received the Regents Teaching Excellence Award - the outstanding teacher in the University System of Georgia.

To participate in the Master Class, please complete the online registration form by Friday 19 December at:
http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/contact_us/masterclass_register.html.

For further enquiries, please contact Sonia Borg in the TLU: sborg@unimelb.edu.au, or phone: 8344 3645

Quantitative Analysis of Teaching and Learning in Business, Economics and Commerce Disciplines Forum (6 February 2009)

The TLU, in conjunction with the Department of Economics, is running its annual quantitative analysis of teaching and learning forum. The Forum is now in its fifth year. 2009 Forum paper titles are as follows:

- What Explains Student Performances in Introductory Economics Subjects in Australian Universities?
- The Impact of Peer Assisted Study Sessions on Academic Performance
- Do Foreign Students Perform Worse at University than Domestic Students? New Evidence Using Panel Micro-Data from the Australian Technology Network
- Overseas Student Commencements and the Real Exchange Rate
- The Ability of Economic Thinking – the Nature versus Nurture Debate
- Comparison of Local and Offshore Student Experience in Microeconomic Principles
- What Matters Most: Understanding Student Satisfaction with Group Work Assessment
- An Investigation of the Influences on Course of Study Questionnaires Using Student Record Data
- Multiple Measures of the Improvement of Research Skills in Business Ethics and Business Law

Full abstracts are available at http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/teaching_staff/forum/index.html

There are no parallel sessions at the Forum and normally 70-100 people attend from 38 universities nationwide. We encourage your participation on what we hope will be an interesting day.

To register, visit http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/contact_us/register.html. Note that there is a \$55 registration fee which covers a copy of the published proceedings and lunch, and there is an additional \$55 fee for the optional dinner at University House. For further information, please contact Sonia Borg: sborg@unimelb.edu.au or Dr Martin Davies wmdavies@unimelb.edu.au.

What is a Capstone Subject?

The Capstone Subject Development Project is a Learning and Teaching Performance funded project initiated by the Associate Dean (Academic Programs) and the Director of the Teaching and Learning Unit in our Faculty.

The Melbourne Model Committee Report on the new generation undergraduate degrees named ‘capstones’ as the culmination of experience in the third year of a degree and which are “understood as offering both disciplinary and cohort coherence and a bridge between undergraduate experience and what lies beyond” (MUCC Report 2006.p7).

This project is investigating definitions of assessable and non-assessable capstone experiences, current models of national and international undergraduate and postgraduate business degree ‘capstones’, and linking these to the new generation University of Melbourne degrees. The project is also looking at the link between graduate attributes and employability skills that have been identified by industry personnel.

Case studies of current capstone experiences, some from within the Faculty and others from other Australian universities will be detailed. Practical models of teaching for graduate attributes and learning outcomes will be highlighted with the inclusion of a toolbox of resources. It is anticipated that a matrix which highlights the common features of a capstone experience for use by teaching staff who may wish to locate their ‘capstone’ work will be identified in this report. The draft report for comment will be tabled at the February 2009 Academic Program Committee meeting.

Annie Holdsworth

TLU Helpsheets for Students: *What's There, What's New?*

Did you know that several thousand TLU Helpsheets are picked up by students in the Faculty each year?

TLU Helpsheets are designed for all Economics and Commerce students: International and Australian, undergraduate and graduate. They develop student awareness of academic expectations within the Faculty and skills in the following areas:

- 1. Text type:** e.g., research reports, case studies, essays, literature reviews, critical reviews, and annotated bibliographies
- 2. Writing:** e.g., clear and concise expression, grammar, paragraphing, editing and proofreading, abbreviations, and punctuation
- 3. Academic Honesty:** e.g., plagiarism, language for citing, The Harvard and APA systems, and paraphrasing
- 4. Research:** e.g., introduction to research, hallmarks of scientific research, fallacies, writing a research proposal, completing a PhD, and working with supervisors
- 5. General Study:** e.g., academic expectations in Australia, critical thinking, exam preparation, reading strategies, and time-management and study skills

In Semester One, 2009, a revised range of TLU Helpsheets will be available. Some of the major changes are:

New Academic Skills Helpsheets

e.g., writing an introduction, essay and report writing checklists, sentence structure, and reporting verbs.

Maths Helpsheets

e.g., statistics, matrix algebra, linear equations, quadratic equations, integration, and exponential and logarithmic equations and their derivatives.

Revised Content

- initial statements of outcomes and self-diagnostic 5-minute activities
- clear, discipline-specific examples
- new exercises
- clear, concise text

Revised Layout and Design

- attractive, accessible design
- short paragraphs
- greater use of titles, bullet points and numeration to aid clarity

How can you use them?

From Semester One, the new helpsheets will be available for collection at the TLU or accessed online at: <http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/students/study/helpsheets.html>

When preparing tasks, you may wish to draw students' attention to relevant Helpsheets, or you may wish to issue them in lectures and tutorials.

Please contact Tim Beaumont: tjb@unimelb.edu.au in the TLU if you have any queries or suggestions for new or improved TLU Helpsheets.

Tim Beaumont