Peer Review of Teaching
Collegial conversations / Enhancing scholarly practice
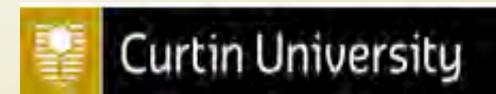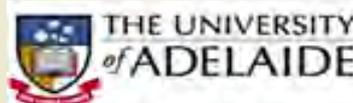
A distributive leadership approach to peer review of teaching: evidence and outcomes of a cross institutional program

HERDSA 2014

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Teaching is a core function of higher education …… 'good' teaching is fundamental to **student learning**

Drawing on Scholarship of Teaching literature our teaching practice should be characterised as:

- ❑ public ('community property')
- ❑ open to critique and evaluation
- ❑ in a form that others can build on
- ❑ involves inquiry and investigation, particularly concerning student learning
- ❑ *and:*
- ❑ be about effective learning; encompassing both teacher & student engagement
- ❑ about advancing excellence in research
- ❑ driven by informed teaching – e.g. evidence from student learning, students, self, peers
- ❑ linked to peer collaboration & personal reflection

(Barnard, et al, 2011; Bell, 2001; Boyer, 1990; Hutchings and Shulman, 1999; MacKinnon, 2001; Magin, 1998 Trigwell, 2000)

❑ Peer review of teaching

- offers a strategy that capitalises on the expertise and experience of academic peers

- can provide valid comment on teaching and curriculum

- consistent with scholarly teaching practice

❑ But …….

- is not universally practised (Harris et al. 2008)

- has variable 'buy in' at the academic coalface

For us, this raised important questions and highlighted the opportunity for investigating novel approaches to facilitating cultural change

Project Aims and Objectives

❑ Overall aim

- improve student learning through building the leadership capacity of academic staff to embed peer review within the culture of teaching and learning

❑ Key objectives

- investigate, discuss, and debate the challenges, benefits and strategies for embedding peer review as part of the teaching and learning culture within higher education;

- develop, pilot, implement and evaluate a distributive leadership model for embedding peer review within a cross-disciplinary context;

- develop resources for dissemination across the university sector.

Project overview

- A **distributed leadership** approach to building capacity for embedding peer review within the culture/s of teaching and learning

- Two-phase 'cascade' **design**

Phase 1: Development & Pilot

Phase 2: Implementation

Iterative evaluation

Project outcomes

- **Key activities**

  - Development of **LeaD-I**n framework

  - Delivery of capacity-building workshops

  - Implementation of strategies to promote cultural change

  - Creation of a purpose-built website to support embedding processes

  - Multi-pronged evaluation

A distributed leadership model

Leadership

▶ a key driver in facilitating any form of cultural change

Development

▶ building capability and supporting engagement

Integration

▶ alignment of purpose, policies, processes

The **LeaD-In** model provides a framework, or lens, for focusing on the work of developing peer review within the culture(s) of teaching practice. It is designed to enable individuals, groups and leaders to see the 'big picture', but be able to focus on particular roles and responsibilities as well. By asking the question "**What do each of the key propositions mean in my context and/or with my focus?**' the model can be a catalyst for developing peer review within particular teaching and learning contexts.

Barnard, A. & Nash, R. et al. (In Press)

Phase One

- ❑ Lobbying, meeting and presentations to committees and senior staff across the Faculty of Health and QUT to develop support for peer review of teaching

- ❑ Identification and support of Faculty of Health champions

- ❑ Establishment of a blackboard community site and the development of resources for use in the FOH, across QUT, and by project partners

- ❑ Rollout of multiple workshops to support uptake and capacity building across 2 campuses with presentations to 120 staff – evaluation of workshops demonstrated overwhelming support for peer review of teaching and readiness to engage in peer review of teaching

- ❑ Design of a questionnaire and collection of evaluation data

- ❑ Focus group interviews with academic staff

Peer Review of Teaching (PRoT) cycle
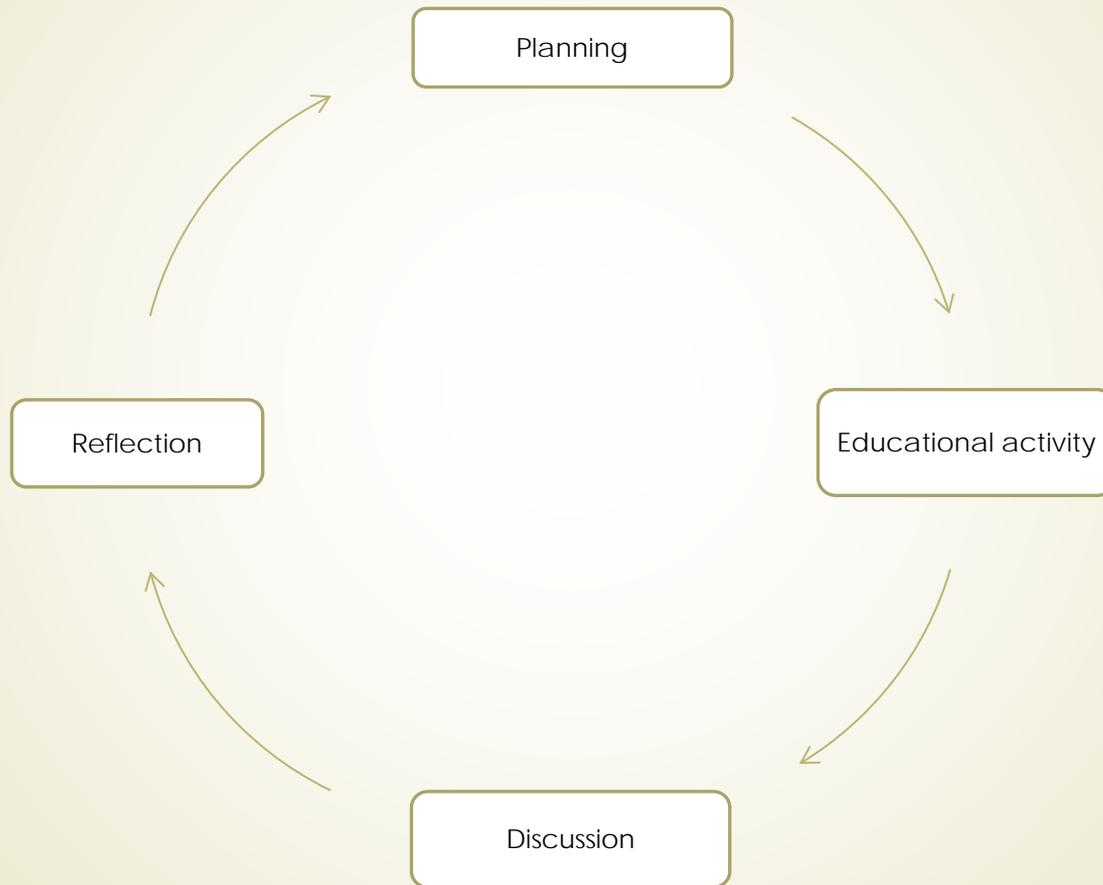
Peer review program principles

- Voluntary

  - ❑ Peer review is valued as part of a personalised evaluation strategy

- Developmental & Constructive

  - ❑ The scope and purpose for the review is determined by the academic but the underlying agreement is that the experience must be supportive and useful

  - ❑ Emphasised as developmental, focusing on both strengths and opportunities for growth

- Confidential

  - ❑ All feedback is confidential. An academic will choose whether to use the feedback to inform their unit or teaching review/ development, their performance review, use as evidence for an award or promotion

Phase Two

❑ The peer review of teaching strategy endorsed as the recommended peer review strategy across QUT from 2013. Resources developed have been endorsed and included as part of a university wide teaching evaluation strategy (ReFrame)

❑ Ongoing advocacy for peer review within the Faculty of Health and broader university

❑ Rollout of multiple workshops to support uptake and capacity building across 2 campuses with presentations to 24 staff (supported also by QUT LTU workshops) – evaluation of workshops continued to demonstrate support for peer review of teaching

❑ Development of online staff resource materials to support advancement of a culture of peer review of teaching in practice including guidelines and resources for transferring outcomes of the project across the university sector

❑ Development of 2 project videos focussing on recommendations for development of a culture of peer review and introduction to peer review of teaching

❑ Follow collection of evaluation data through project questionnaire

❑ Focus group interviews with academic staff and stakeholders

Outcomes

❑ Attitudes towards PRoT

A consistent pattern highlighted positive staff attitudes toward peer review as a strategy for obtaining feedback on teaching:

Phase 1:

- 80-85% agreed/strongly agreed that 'peers can provide a uniquely valuable source of feedback about teaching practice'

Phase 2:

- 83-86% agreed/strongly agreed that 'peer review is a valuable strategy for evaluating teaching'

❑ Participation in PRoT

Phase 1:

- 39.7% indicated that they had undertaken peer review within the past 12 months

Phase 2:

- 40.8% indicated that they had undertaken peer review within the past 12 months

Of those who responded 'No' - 52% *intending* to undertake peer review in the next 12 months

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Outcomes (Phase 2)

Responses of academic staff who had undertaken peer review of teaching within the past 12 months

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
				%		
Peer review of teaching increased my confidence as a teacher.	23.5	47.1	29.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Peer review of teaching provided me with insight into my teaching.	11.8	64.7	23.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Peer review of teaching decreased my feeling of isolation as a teacher.	11.8	35.3	23.5	11.8	11.8	5.9
Peer review of teaching encouraged me to try new things in my teaching practice.	17.6	47.1	11.8	11.8	11.8	0.0
I would like to share the outcomes of my peer review in discussions with my supervisor.	11.8	35.3	23.5	5.9	17.6	5.9
Engaging in peer review helped me to critically reflect on my teaching practice.	17.6	58.8	23.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall, peer review is a valuable strategy for evaluating teaching.	29.4	52.9	17.6	0.0	0.0	0.0

Outcomes

- Participants' experience of PRoT
    - *The most valuable thing to me was getting feedback. The feedback was valuable and I put the ideas into practice.*
    - *For me, it was knowing that I could get something valuable and something that could be used later. I found that very motivating*
- Perceived impact on teaching
    - New ideas regarding teaching methods, eg. *suggestions for alternative approaches*
    - Better understanding of myself as a teacher/my impact on students' learning, eg. *an awareness of the flow within my lectures*
    - Validation of teaching approaches being used/myself as a teacher, eg. *confirmation of things I do well*.

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Home   About   The project story   Processes and guidelines   Tools   Changing practice   Find out more

Welcome

The Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) website is part of a two year project funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) / Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT).

One of the ironies of higher education is that while peer review of research is a firmly established and internationally recognised cornerstone of academic scholarship, peer review of teaching - the practice of colleagues providing feedback on one another's teaching - has little or no prominence in university policies and does not feature strongly in academic cultures and practices (Harris et al. 2008, p.3).

Using peer review to enhance your teaching

About peer review of teaching

Peer review of teaching in higher education contexts involves a purposeful, collaborative process whereby one peer observes another's teaching and provides constructive feedback on its effectiveness in promoting student learning.

➡ Read more

The project story

This two-year project has been undertaken by a multi-university team involving project partners from Queensland University of Technology, Curtin University, University of Adelaide and University of Technology Sydney.

➡ Read more

Processes and guidelines

The process of PRT provides a structured framework for the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning practices through peer collaboration, discussion and the dissemination of ideas and good practice.

Peer Review Cycle

Reflection   Planning
Discussion   Observation

➡ Read more

Tools

Changing practice

Find out more

Commentary on the outcomes

- *Organisational readiness*: When there was increasing focus on teaching quality there was support for evaluation strategies that included peer review of teaching

- *Leadership*: Faculty leadership, particularly at the senior staff school level, was fundamentally important for the success of the project, as were the identification of champions amongst teaching staff and early adopters

- *Gaining commitment for PRT*: Staff did commit to peer review of teaching if they were able to see tangible benefit arise from it. As a personal choice they needed a reason to do it, but those who did engage were encouraged by the focus that was clearly on ownership, confidentiality and supportive development

- *Buy in*: Not every academic was interested in peer review of teaching and that was okay—the intent has been to encourage those who will, and model the benefits to others

- *Sustainability*: Growth of a culture conducive to acceptance of peer review of teaching has taken a lot of time and requires ongoing commitment from every level of leadership

- *Changes to teaching quality*: Short-term assessment of peer review of teaching outcomes is not realistic and would not adequately measure its impact on teaching quality. There is often outcome lag since staff draw on a range of evidence to inform their teaching and need to develop skills and commitment to begin to gain best benefits of peer review

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Challenges that arose

❑ Challenges

- ❑ We learnt there is no one culture of learning and teaching, but many cultures within schools, groups, disciplines, and the organisation

- ❑ Turning espoused support by leaders at all levels into actual promotion of the activity

- ❑ People like peer review in principle but need a reason and ability to invest the time

- ❑ Creation of a focus on the value of teaching within an established research intensive university culture

❑ Challenges

- ❑ Exposure and fear of being observed or observing others

- ❑ Lack of vocabulary, theory and fluency to talk about teaching

- ❑ Competing demands

- ❑ Strategies for sessional staff to participate fully

- ❑ Finding a partner outside your discipline

Reflection from all partners

❑ Change needs integrated supportive policies and practices implemented through communities of practice, champions and support of stakeholders

❑ PRoT is of minimal benefit without analysis and reflection

❑ Need to engage in leadership that articulates a clear vision and demonstrates respect for shared responsibility

❑ Cannot be sustained within a vacuum or by one person

❑ Need to invest in resources and time to grow a rich and innovative infrastructure of ideas, processes, technology, spaces and opportunities upon which academics can build their expertise and scholarship

❑ **Focus on formative purposes not just summative**

❑ PRoT is persuasive and helpful for promotion when done well

❑ There was debate about issues around PRoT being Mandatory? Manageable? Ethical? Meaningful ?

❑ For sustained change the journey is long but exciting

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Recommendations from project

- That universities ensure that they regularly review policies to support developmental peer review as a key strategy for academic staff to obtain 360° feedback on their teaching, including workload models that recognise the role of peer review as a fundamental component of scholarly teaching practice, and promotion policies that recognise evidence presented through summative peer review processes

- That ongoing professional development programs be offered to support the skill development of staff engaging in peer review, including basic strategies for both peer reviewees *and peer reviewers, and more advanced skills in developing the scholarly dimension of peer review*

- That Peer Review Networks (or equivalent) for all levels of academic staff be fostered within institutions and sponsored by senior leaders. They should provide a platform for collaborative dialogue regarding learning and teaching issues, particularly with respect to quality and standards at the teaching interface, and the development of sustainable infrastructure to support peer review within each institutional context

- That academic departments and faculties include as a strategic priority local approaches to supporting peer review, and recognising peer review champions and teaching scholars as part of a broader, aligned strategy for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning

Acknowledgements

❑ The project team wish to acknowledge Australian government support through the Australian learning and Teaching Council / Office for Learning and Teaching via a Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Grant

❑ The project team wish to acknowledge the contribution of the many inspiring academics involved in the project

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