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A Question of Assessment

Ann Sefton, Faculty of Medicine

It is the time of year when our thoughts are not turning only to Spring, but rather to exams: setting and marking them, supervising, entering marks, reviewing and perhaps massaging results, attending examiners' meetings, counselling candidates, and hearing appeals. Semesterisation now means that many of these familiar end-of-year rituals are repeated in the middle of the year as well. This highlights some important questions.

Why assess?

Good assessment ensures effective learning and provides timely feedback. It is an essential component of good teaching and must be recognised and rewarded. Poor assessment sees students set infrequent, unseen tests in unfamiliar formats, or loads them with tasks occupying many hours of effort, without feedback, for a minimal reward, often at an intensity that precludes them from other activities. We have responsibilities to certify competence; determine continuation in programs; graduate students; and award prizes or scholarships.

What to assess?

Content knowledge is important in any discipline, but more crucial is the capacity to use and apply that knowledge. Recall of facts in an artificial examination situation is easy to test, but often of dubious validity. There are now agreed generic skills [http://db.usyd.edu.au/policy/policy_index.stm] that define a graduate of the University of Sydney, yet many assessments do not address them. If higher level goals are to be met, some integration across disciplines and between years is essential.

How to assess?

A wide variety of techniques is available and necessary in a diverse institution such as Sydney. It is, however, apparent that there is a tension between norm-referencing (ranking students) and criterion-referencing (setting standards to be achieved). Results from the two different strategies are sometimes mixed in an uninformed way, or marks/grades from different examiners are summed without some form of prior calibration or subsequent normalisation. Norm-referencing is often applied inappropriately to small candidatures and can be used inappropriately to equate performance in disparate disciplines. Questions or papers are all too frequently set and marked by individuals without informed critical review by others.

How much to assess?

Good assessment, both planning and marking, occupies time. We have to budget for that time as part of overall teaching, in allocating tasks and recognising teaching contributions. We must sample enough to be confident that the results we obtain are reliable, without drowning staff and students.

When to assess?

Assessment for feedback on learning must be undertaken regularly in all courses and programs. One examination per semester is inadequate; good practice suggests that at least some assessment should be occurring throughout. Semesterisation poses particular problems in that there may well be no opportunity for students to develop a mature and integrated view of a discipline.

Is there light ahead?

The Teaching and Learning Committee is reviewing policies and guidelines on assessment developed over 40 years. They are dated, confusing and often contradictory. New integrated policies- based on good educational practice- are being developed to replace them, clearly specifying expectations and responsibilities for students, staff, departments and faculties. Comments on progressive drafts will be welcomed.

Professor Ann Sefton chairs the Academic Board's Teaching and Learning Committee, which has responsibility for considering issues, policies and processes relating to teaching and learning across the University.

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A Time for Reflection

Angela Brew, Centre for Teaching and Learning

We have been doing a lot of thinking in the CTL lately. Like many departments in the University, we have been wondering how we can best utilise our resources to maximum effect. Many challenges are facing the academic community: increasing flexibility of course provision; new technologies; increased student numbers; decline in TER; increased competitiveness; decline in funding... the list goes on. The question for us in the CTL has been: how can our work with academics enhance their ability to address these demands?

This hard thinking has followed the farewell which we gave our director, Jackie Lublin. The CTL was founded in 1981 and Jackie joined it in 1982, immediately taking a leading role in building up the idea of a Centre in the face of what must be acknowledged as considerable opposition. Jackie was responsible for the workshop program which is such an influential part of how the CTL is viewed in the University today. She cared passionately about teaching and learning in the University, stirring lecturers to spend more time on teaching and tirelessly lobbied and cajoled the university to put teaching on its agenda.

In the CTL, Jackie's departure has provided a time for reflection. Ernest Boyer, in that now classic text on academic priorities (1990), suggests that:

> "The most important obligation now confronting... colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar." (Boyer 1990: xii)

Boyer's idea of scholarship is that this should be extended to apply to teaching. Teaching which is done in a scholarly and professional manner is

planned and executed with a knowledge of the literature on teaching and learning and of how the subject is taught elsewhere, and in the critical evaluation of practice based on evidence. This idea of professionalism in teaching has recently been highlighted in the UK's Dearing Report on higher education (Dearing 1997). Will the West Committee follow suit, we wonder?

With teaching now firmly on the agenda internationally and nationally, the University of Sydney is demonstrating its commitment to it in, for example, the work of the University's Teaching and Learning Committee, in the new promotions procedures and in the University's decision to fund teaching performance.

In this new climate, our work is moving forwards and outwards. As a team of professionals who work with academic staff to enhance and encourage scholarship and professionalism in teaching and learning, we are increasingly working with faculties and departments in consultation and co-presentation of workshops. Our curriculum is, like others, becoming more flexible with increasing use of the Internet to deliver educational activities. Our New Technologies in Teaching and Learning Unit (NeTTL) is leading academics in their pursuit of flexible delivery of the curriculum through communication and information technology. Also, you can now use the CTL Web page to read "Synergy", order your feedback questionnaires, learn effective demonstrating, learn how to write objectives, register for a workshop or get a list of journals related to teaching your field.

There is still a lot of thinking to be done. We are designing a curriculum with an emphasis on scholarship and professionalism in teaching and would like to hear from you what you would wish to see included. In this way we are working with you, and with your department, faculty or college in addressing the teaching and learning challenges and strategic priorities with which we are all concerned.

Dr Angela Brew is the Acting Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

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Flexible Learning and the Paradigm Shift

David Roberts, Orange Agricultural College

Whether we like it or not, higher education is experiencing a period of unprecedented change. The reasons for this are complex and open to debate. Many would argue that the changes are being driven by a combination of an escalating knowledge explosion, the advent of new technologies, economic rationalism, globalisation, the changing nature of the workplace and the research of cognitive scientists. Whatever the reasons, it would seem that higher education is undergoing a drastic re-think of such proportions that it has been dubbed 'a paradigm shift'.

The term 'paradigm shift' is already suffering from over-exposure and raises the question, is it appropriate to say that higher education is presently undergoing such a process? A paradigm is generally recognised as being a world view held by a community or a group of people. Hall (1996) has suggested that a term that encapsulates the type of learning that will be prevalent in the new learning is "coactive learning". This term represents, he says

> "... a constant learning exchange that is never one-sided or one-dimensional but constant, participatory, and interactive by nature" (Hall, 1996: 29).

Fundamental to the new approach is the emphasis upon the student and how the student learns.

> "Focusing on student learning turns our thinking about the future of our colleges and universities upside down: from faculty productivity to student productivity, from faculty disciplinary interests to what students need to learn, from faculty teaching styles to student learning

styles, from classroom teaching to student learning" (Guskin, 1994:7).

Incorporated into the new thinking are the notions of open learning and flexible learning. In a short article such as this it is not possible to properly explore these terms or even define them except, I fear, in a rather simplistic manner. Open learning is, in essence, a philosophy that places the student at the centre of the learning process. There are different measures of openness, but all are designed to enhance the opportunities for students to learn in more accessible and meaningful ways. We have open entry, (eg The Open University in the UK with over 150,000 students) openness in time, (eg distance education when students study when it suits them), openness in location (eg part-time students who prefer to study at home or at the workplace).

Flexible learning is a term that encapsulates much of the 'open' philosophy in that it advocates student choice in how they conduct their studies. Many students may still opt to attend lectures and tutorials at set times and at set locations. Increasingly, however, students will be looking for viable alternatives in which *they* (not the higher education institution) control the learning process. Students will demand greater freedom to study when, where and how it suits them.

It is not difficult to see the impact of new technology as a conduit to provide for the independent learning needs of an increasing number of students. As lifelong learning and the requirements of the workforce to be constantly upgrading and updating intensifies, the conventional lecture/tutorial delivery method will be severely, challenged. The higher education institutions that have adopted flexible learning approaches will prosper because students will seek them out in preference to those that continue to offer only conventional lecture/tutorials. The day may fast be approaching when students will select their universities rather than universities selecting their students.

In recent years the value of distance education development units at certain universities has become increasingly apparent for two further reasons; staff development and resource-based learning. In dual-mode institutions, where lecturing staff are required to teach both on-campus and off-campus, there has been a substantial transfer of teaching skills. Lecturers teaching by distance education have profited pedagogically by working closely with instructional designers in developing quality learning materials for their off-campus students. They have been assisted in defining learning outcomes, creating well structured learning strategies, incorporating active-learning techniques, extending their use of teaching media and better understanding how students learn. This in itself has been a valuable staff development exercise for them as they then transfer these sound principles of learning and more reliable learning techniques to their on-campus teaching. In most dual-mode institutions you will now find that the on-campus students also have access to the distance education materials thereby opening up all kinds of flexible learning opportunities to the teaching-learning situation.

The use of distance education materials in an on-campus context is sometimes referred to as "resource-based learning" There is increasing research evidence indicating that the effectiveness of resource based learning is dependent upon how the materials are actually integrated into the teaching/learning process by the lecturer. Resource-based learning is one potentially very effective method of introducing more flexible learning methods into higher education.

The University of Sydney is fortunate to have the services of a distance education unit that has had experience in distance education, flexible learning

and resource-based learning methods for nearly twenty years. Based at the University's campus at Orange Agricultural College is a team of instructional designers, academic editors, desk-top publishers and student support staff together with state-of-the-art printing technology and the facilities for producing audio/video cassettes. The unit is also currently trialling units for its distance education students to be delivered on-line. The unit, known as the Educational Services Unit, is headed by Chris Morgan, and is prepared to provide professional advice and assistance to any individual staff, departments, course teams wishing to make use of its expertise.

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Experiences of a Foundation Tutor

Hilary Lloyd, Department of Pharmacology

Over the course of the first eleven weeks of being a Graduate Medical Program (GMP) tutor, I witnessed substantial changes in student's attitude towards learning. Their ability to focus, share information and learn from each other developed into a tutorial dynamic which reflected maturity of approach and thought. A former colleague from my Department, with 30 years of teaching experience, sat in on two of the tutorials and was impressed with the students initiative, enthusiasm and autonomy.

As I saw the positive changes occurring in the groups activities, my concerns about whether the new methods of learning could really work began to subside and I experienced the novelty of "letting go", allowing the focus of activity to be entirely the students. Aside from it being a Graduate Degree, the distinguishing feature of the GMP is that it relies heavily upon problem-based learning (PBL). The course is structured around weekly clinical problems which students must work through and "solve". They do so by attending 3 PBL tutorials, in which the students identify their own learning topics with guidance from a tutor.

Each tutorial is modelled on the "clinical reasoning process". In the first tutorial, students see a short "movie" or a series of still photos with voice overlay. This is known as the "trigger" and it may depict an accident or it may show a patient visiting a doctor with a specific concern, such as weight loss or tiredness. From the trigger, students reconstruct as much as they can of the case by listing all available information, the so-called "cues". Next, they summarise their observations into a statement of the problem. This generates a series of questions and, after further discussion, students speculate (hypothesise) about what they think the problem might be. In parallel with the generation of questions and hypotheses, learning topics are identified for later self-directed learning.

In the second tutorial, equipped with a better understanding of aspects of the problem through their learning, students aim to determine which of the several hypotheses generated in tutorial one, is the most likely to be correct. By thoughtful questioning, information is obtained from the tutor about the history and physical condition of the patient, as well as results of routine and/or specific tests (e.g. liver function test). At this stage, students are usually able to arrive at a diagnostic decision and, from there, develop a management plan. The final tutorial affords the opportunity of reviewing the outcome of the patient and the learning acquired from working through the problem.

The challenge is to develop student skills for having structured discussions and an ability to link disparate ideas. For this purpose the tutor guides were invaluable, since they provided the framework for the discussions. At first, I constantly intervened with comments and questions but it is easy to overdo this, thereby stifling student discussion. I found it useful to apply a technique called "Mind-Mapping", which helped me to interrelate the key concepts being covered by the problem by drawing elaborate flow charts. My students were initially hesitant about adopting this unorthodox approach of mind-mapping, but were willing to use it during the review of the problem, and most thought it a valuable exercise.

A further novelty of the experience of being a GMP tutor was attending tutorial review sessions each week, chaired by A/Prof. Jill Gordon. Over freshly brewed coffee and sandwiches, 17 tutors shared their opinions of how the problem was going. We were also encouraged to offer critical or praising comments to the writers of the problems and were briefed about the next problem. These sessions exposed the differences in tutoring styles and tutorial group dynamics. Nevertheless, there was general agreement that the new method of teaching medicine was proving to be a richly rewarding experience.

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Popularising Geography through Popular Culture

John Connell and Chris Gibson,
Department of Geography

The Department of Geography takes in over 250 first year students from more than five faculties. One of our most difficult tasks has been to develop two and three hour long practical classes that engage all students, irrespective of whether they are science students (the official home of geography) or from Arts, Economics, Law, Education or elsewhere.

Part of this has involved developing approaches that focus on the immediate experience of students where they investigate problems close to everyday life. This involves topics such as seasonal and dirunal variations in domestic water usage; the evolution of the restaurant industry in their home suburbs (as consumption patterns and mobility changes); migration and settlement of themselves and their neighbours; and the manner in which the media (from the mainstream "Sydney Morning Herald" to "street mags" such as "On the Street") focus on particular issues and regions.

Such projects have been designed to demonstrate the relevance of geographical approaches in the understanding of economic, social and environmental aspects of daily/urban life. Wherever possible- as in a lengthy walk from Marrickville station back to the University- students directly experience parts of the city with which they are often unfamiliar.

One of the most successful projects has centred around the analysis of popular music, which is being increasingly incorporated into geographic praxis- both as a research area in itself, and as a powerful teaching tool. For many non-geographers, this marriage of music studies and geography may seem incongruous. Music can fill a given space but cannot be seen, cannot occupy, or constitute space in a material fashion. However, musical texts can provide a rich source of symbolism, imagery and description of particular places. It is difficult to think of Liverpool, UK, without conjuring up images

of the Beatles; or similarly imagining Nashville, Tennessee without the distinctive twang of country and western music.

New classes taught in first year geography build on these "everyday" connections, requiring students to analyse the lyrics and sounds of a variety of musical texts, from reggae to rap, from Beach Boys to Yothu Yindi. Practical exercises revolve around groups of students thinking creatively and constructively regarding songs about particular locations- "New York, New York"; "Burn Hollywood Burn" or even "Advance Australia Fair"- and putting together seminar presentations on how these sounds construct (often conflicting) evocations of place.

In this sense, the emphasis of this new approach is on visiting well-known methods of geography through unlikely means- students are encouraged to think laterally and creatively using the aspects of everyday life that remain familiar to them- and not to simply repeat that which is guided towards them via lectern or computer screen. In encouraging this sort of self-reflectivity, we are able to show more clearly how popular culture and the media more broadly, structure daily lives and influence public discourse.

Moreover, as teachers, these experiences have shown us that popular culture can often prove triumphant over more "formal" teaching narratives; that the subjectivities of students' interactions with the world, alongside more "rigorous" objective pursuits, remain crucial to successful teaching and affirming the validity of geography in surprising arenas.

Associate Professor John Connell and Chris Gibson teach courses in social and cultural geography in the Department of Geography. They are currently writing a volume on geography and popular music, to be released through Routledge.

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Teaching and the Internet

Peter Phibbs,
Department of Urban and Regional Planning

The views on the impact of the Internet on university teaching are diverse. One gets the impression that "university accountants" are excited about the potential of the Internet to substantially reduce unit costs of course delivery. This idea is shared by Dale Spender, the Australian social commentator who writes:

> "As an adult student why would you want to travel all the way to a university campus, where you can't park: to sit in a stuffy lecture room and listen to a droning monologue on politics... Why would you go through this when you could dial up a database or get on the Internet, and be "edutained" by some of the most stimulating political personalities ... And all presented with the panache and ... Universities are going to have to undergo radical restructuring right now, or else find themselves without a role" (Spencer, 1995:100)

This view is in stark contrast with the American academic and self-confessed computer nerd, Clifford Stoll who comments:

> "Computers and the Internet do the same - they make it easy for everyone, but damn little teaching happens ... I guess what I am trying to say is this: students deserve personal contact with instructors- interactive videos and remote broadcasts are no substitute for studying under a fired-up teacher who's there in person" (Stoll, 1995: 117-188)

My own view fits between these two opinions. Whilst I think remote learning will have an important role to play, it is more likely to support face-to-face teaching than to replace it. One way the Internet can support face-to-face teaching is through the use of learning networks in Universities.

This use of computer technology is likely to deliver large dividends for universities for two reasons. Firstly computer applications developed for learning networks can be used over a wide range of university courses. Secondly learning networks have a close connection to learning theory.

Part of the outcome of my time at the CTL was to write some software that can set up a learning network for any course using a simple menu-driven interface; no HTML required. The central element of a learning network is a discussion group/bulletin board/email application where students and teachers can interact over the Internet (or in some cases over the university intranet). From my observations this provides potential for significant educational gains through access to new ideas, perspectives, cultures and information- enriching locally available resources. The time, place and pace of education are expanded and become more individualised, with peer interaction and collaboration emphasised

Active learning is also promoted. The task of writing and reviewing the writing of others becomes an active task for students, providing them with constant practice of an important skill. This helps break down communication barriers and inhibitions that often stifle the open exchange of ideas in traditional classrooms. For example, no one in the class can observe how long it took or how much effort went into an individual student response, providing the slower learner with virtual equality that is not usually available in the face-to-face class. Students who can't get the question out in class (or who didn't think of it until later) can still pose the question. The online classroom is always open.

However, there are also a number of disadvantages of learning networks. It involves more preparation work for teachers and students report information overload, communication anxiety, and increased workloads and responsibility. Online systems can be difficult to navigate with a loss of visual cues and students may not want to "expose" themselves to other students. Finally the concerns about health issues are not yet resolved.

Would you like to have a look at a learning network? Drop by and visit one at: http://plan.arch.usyd.edu.au/learn [http://plan.arch.usyd.edu.au/learn]

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Posters and Postgrads

Geoff Gurr, Orange Agricultural College

As a medium for professional discourse the poster paper has become a well accepted complement to the verbally delivered conference paper. Several publications exist which outline best practice in regard to their preparation and the benefits of poster papers over verbal papers have been discussed by various authors. The purpose of this article is to consider the role of poster papers in the educational development of research students.

Posters and Communication

Effective communication skills have become an increasingly important educational outcome in their own right. Contemporary attitudes towards research demand that researchers are able to communicate their findings beyond their peers to argue the importance of their work to workplace masters, funding agencies, the media, and the general public. If they are to succeed in future careers, students presently undertaking research degrees will need to graduate with competencies which will allow them to do this far more effectively than those of a generation before. Provided that the pitfall of concentrating too heavily on the aesthetics of the poster at the expense of its content is avoided, the process of producing it may also be a useful exercise in the development of critical thinking skills.

Posters and Critical Thinking

A common problem with novice researchers is that they become so immersed in the minutiae of their research project that they are unable to take an objective view of their work in the broader context of the given field. Preparation of a poster paper is a particularly good exercise in distilling what may

be a complex and detailed piece of research into key elements because of the explicit constraints of finite space and maintaining a readable font size. The preparation of a poster requires the researcher to step back from the work and critically review it, asking such questions as: do these data really show what I believe they do? is there an alternative explanation for what I have observed? and what are the implications of these findings? This process of critical thinking is a valuable lesson which has to be learned by all researchers and the preparation of a poster paper can be valuable in motivating the research student to do so to the standard which must be achieved (and subsequently exceeded) if refereed publications and an appropriate thesis are to eventuate.

Publication and Feedback

The findings of my small-scale survey of conference poster presenters suggests that research students are well represented amongst those presenting posters and that few had previously produced a more formal publication. Thus, posters are an important stepping stone on the way to a publication track record. In addition, they serve as a context for the refinement, by discursive interaction with others, of the meaning which their learning has created.

Highert (1950) has likened the educational process to the exploration of an unknown tract of country. Extending this analogy to consider the educational benefits of posters, one may liken it to the student providing a carefully thought-out sketch map of the particular area of terrain they have been exploring and then presenting the map to others in order to explain where they have been and what they have found. Thus the process of planning and producing the poster, as well as its presentation and the feedback it stimulates, all have potential to assist in the educational process for postgrads.

Ultimately, one of the greatest pleasures of learning is the feeling that significant others will share one's enthusiasm and treat one's contribution with respect. Observing my own postgrads at recent conferences convinces me that, as well as materially contributing to their learning, the presentation of a poster also helps them become known to the community in which they are destined to work.

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Learning from Teaching

Peter Kandlbinder, Centre for Teaching and Learning

For university teachers concerned with the immediate issues of classroom management, educational theory can appear abstract and difficult to apply in their own particular situation. Far better to see the personal theories that inform good teaching first hand and use the opportunity to reflect on how they can apply to our own teaching. The Special Seminar for the Awards for Excellence in Teaching is an opportunity for academic staff to see staff who have received an Award demonstrate their teaching and explain how it helps their students learn.

At this year's seminar held on Friday 2 October, Peter Robinson tackled the difficulties of explaining complex theoretical material. His starting point is the students' conceptions of physics when they enter his classroom. This, he said, varies depending on the degree of previous experience and interest in science, but nevertheless a number of misconceptions lead to a perception of physics as mysterious or incomprehensible. Peter suggested confronting these misconceptions and demonstrating that the natural world can behave in counter-intuitive ways. He discussed how he avoids complications and concentrates on the main ideas using a principle of "simplify without saying anything which is incorrect". Peter illustrated the importance of demonstrations in his teaching with examples of bath-tub games and lasers to clarify his explanation of waves and particles.

Drawing on numerous examples from the computer industry, Tony Greening presented a personal reflection on teaching and learning focussing on the place of mistakes and misconceptions. To Tony, an absence of student errors does not demonstrate that the students actually know the general concepts. Helping students to see the consequences of their mistakes is more important than avoiding errors, which, he said, can lead to conflicts between "borrowing" computer code to get the task done and working a solution out for themselves. The goal for university teachers, according to Tony, is to make the errors work for students. Teaching them how to recognise and document their errors is a useful part of learning.

Gareth Denyer asked "How can we know that our graduates really have the generic skills that we and the employers say we want them to have?" The difficulty, according to Gareth, is that generic skills are not put on an equal footing with content and we are wasting opportunities unless all skills are assessed. So in his teaching he has thrown out the recipe book approach and concentrated on the skills which are of particular interest to biochemists- communication, reflection and professional development, study skills, computer, problem-solving and laboratory skills. He said it is necessary to explain to the students the benefit in terms of employable skills and portability to other subjects. Once the students have been exposed to this type of teaching, Gareth said, they start to drive the process of change and exert pressure on others to improve their teaching practice.

"Is Japanese difficult to learn?" Only one or two in the audience of over fifty people didn't seem to think so. To help students get over this pre-conception, Colin Noble suggested we should look at combining two alternatives- start from the known and move to the unknown and look at English language learning. He presented evidence that English is itself a difficult language to learn and illustrated his assertion with examples of the numerous contradictions within English. The goal he said was to convince our students that a combination of letters like "ough" from words such as "cough" and "through" are a symbol not un-like the Japanese Kanji characters and had not proved difficult for them to learn. By presenting the participants with a graphic demonstration of how the meaning of a word can be built up from an existing understanding of a few Japanese characters, we were all conversant with the dangers of "fish eyes" and "thunder fish" by the end of the presentation.

Following the morning's seminar the participants were able to meet the presenters and discuss the stimulating ideas raised. If you would like assistance in preparing a case for an Award for Excellence in Teaching, please contact the CTL.

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Reconciliation and Research

Wendy Brady, Koori Centre

The role of research for many Indigenous Australians has been one where we have been viewed as the subjects of the research rather than the active owners of projects or research programs. In recent years with increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders voicing the necessity for the protection of our knowledge and the recognition of Indigenous researchers we are realising a greater determination of research which serves our needs and interests.

Our participation in higher education has increased over the past twenty years and the presence of Indigenous Australians in academic and administration positions has changed the face of universities and, particularly, notions of what constitutes appropriate research in Aboriginal affairs. The majority of non-Aboriginal academics and researchers progress through their programs of study until they hopefully gain the opportunity to act as principal researchers and acquire funds to conduct research projects. The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and researchers enter university career paths from different backgrounds often after alienating experiences of school and education in general. The path to achieving at levels usually considered fundamental for the engagement in academic research is generally rather more difficult for Indigenous Australians. This system is not inviting for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the few who do move from undergraduate to postgraduate research find it extremely daunting especially when attempting to achieve against different cultural norms.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Aboriginal Centres in the University have been conducting a Research Skills Development Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Academics over 1996 and 1997. It has been a great success not only for the number of Indigenous Australian researchers who have successfully participated in postgraduate degree programs but also in making applications for research funds. Not all the

applications were successful but the increase in confidence and working in coalition with non-Aboriginal researchers has opened the way for greater involvement and interest in research by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics.

Members of the Koori Centre participated in the CTL's Research Residential last year and the experience of learning about research alongside non-Aboriginal members of the University provided the opportunity to exchange views and understandings of how research impacts upon Indigenous Australians. The need for non-Aboriginal researchers to experience and learn from Indigenous colleagues is great. The past history of research conducted by non-Aboriginal people on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, usually without any real change in the disadvantages people were experiencing, is changing through information sharing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers are not only working towards achieving success in their higher degree studies, but also effecting change in the lives of their communities. There is a personal and cultural consideration which can drive research rather than a career aspiration. The process of Reconciliation has assisted many non-Aboriginal Australians to realise the potential for working cross-culturally and it has provided the opportunity for Indigenous Australians to guide the research which we need to meet our community goals, needs and aspirations.

The staff of the Koori Centre welcome non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal academics to visit and/or discuss cross cultural research, education or curriculum development. We enjoy having the opportunity to open up new avenues for reconciliation and research.

Dr. Wendy Brady is the Head of the Indigenous Studies Unit at the Koori Centre and a member of the Wiradjuri Nation

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Scholarship in Teaching

Simon Barrie, Centre for Teaching and Learning

The professionalisation of academic work seems to be an inevitable trend in higher education, both in Australia and overseas. There are obviously many pathways to professionalism particularly in the academic role of teaching. Certainly high levels of professional expertise are apparent in the many outstanding examples of teaching showcased in events such as the University of Sydney Awards for Excellence in Teaching and the Vice Chancellor's Teaching and Learning fora. One pathway to further develop professionalism in teaching is through continuing education and formal qualifications in university teaching.

Staff from the University of Sydney have, for some years, been able to participate in the Introduction to University Teaching (IUT) course offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Over the past two years, this course has been revised and extended into a new course Introduction to University Teaching, Learning and Assessment (IUTLA) which now constitutes a Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies offered jointly by the CTL and the Faculty of Education. The course articulates with a Graduate Diploma in Educational Studies and successful completion of the certificate course is equivalent to two units of credit in the Faculty of Education Masters program. Staff who have successfully completed IUT in the past two years are able to upgrade to the Graduate Certificate by completing additional short courses and assessed projects.

Nine staff members are presently completing their second semester of study in the IUTLA course. These staff range from relatively new tutors to very experienced lecturing staff. The course aims to develop in course members a scholarly basis for all aspects of university teaching. The topics covered are diverse and there is scope for course members to negotiate topics of particular relevance to their context. As such, topics have included cross-cultural teaching strategies, models of student learning, assessment design and managing innovative curriculum change.

The course is two semesters of part time study with fortnightly group meetings. While rigorous and intellectually challenging, the course recognises the time constraints academics operate under. Staff are able to draw on their existing teaching activities and responsibilities for assessed project work and in the workshop discussions.

In addition to gaining new practical skills and an understanding of teaching and learning theory, past graduates of the course have had their teaching expertise recognised in several ways. Staff have cited IUT in successful promotion and award applications. Their investigations into their own teaching have also led to international conference presentations and publications in the higher education research journals. In some cases, projects started in IUTLA have developed into significant curriculum innovations of considerable benefit to the course members department or faculty.

The course is offered on a full fee paying basis. The University of Sydney covers the cost of the course fees for all participants employed by the university including persons employed as casual level A academic staff. This is in recognition of the benefit to the university of fostering teaching excellence in its staff. It is hoped that departments and faculties will also support staff participating in the course through teaching release or similar mechanisms.

Enrolments for the 1998 IUTLA course are now being accepted. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the course please contact Simon Barrie on ext 1-5814. An electronic brochure containing details of the course and an email registration link are available on the CTL web page [http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ctl/iutla.htm [http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ctl/iutla.htm]]. If you do not have Internet access please phone the CTL and a brochure will be posted to you.

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Successful Supervision

James Rendell, Centre for Teaching and Learning

After a somewhat dramatic start to the year, the Postgraduate Supervisor's Development Program proved to be an opportunity for postgraduate supervisors within a wide range of faculties and departments to further develop their supervisory skills. The aim of the program in the first semester included providing the information and skills to assist supervisors to navigate the often difficult task of postgraduate supervision. The second semester topics built upon the first semester workshops by providing opportunities for a more in-depth focus upon specific issues relating to postgraduate supervision such as supervising International and NESB postgraduate research students and supervision at a distance.

The workshops brought together over 40 presenters with extensive experience in postgraduate supervision. The topics of discussion covered a wide range of issues with the most popular including:

- Negotiating the university regulations: planning postgraduate supervision
- Successful Supervision: Making the code of practice work.
- Conforming to ethics guidelines
- Publications and the Postgraduate Research Student: The supervisor's role.

Geography and technology proved to be surmountable barriers as participants joined an audio conference combining the Orange, Cumberland and

Camperdown Campuses to discuss the logistics of supervising students based off campus. Regardless of the range of topics, whether on the planning of postgraduate research, development of students writing skills or the supervision of clinical research, discussions often revolved around the University's code of practice as the key for effective supervision.

As any student can attest the role of the supervisor is critically important to the successful completion of any course of postgraduate study. Through this program the CTL hopes to directly support the unique educational relationship that comes from supervising research students. Its importance to the University is underlined by the diverse range of participants attending each workshop. Participants came from faculties such as Pharmacy, Nursing, Medicine and Health Sciences at Cumberland. The Arts Faculty was represented by people from departments and centres including, the Centre for English Teaching, the Conservatorium of Music and Museum Studies.

The program could not be run without the support of the experienced supervisors who facilitated the sessions. These people lent their time and wealth of professional experience to ensure that the workshops were a success. The program is delivered in collaboration with the Graduate Studies Committee which advises the Academic Board on effective supervisory practices for postgraduate research students.

Planning for the 1998 program is now underway. Future directions will see a repackaged program for next year with the CTL investigating ways to incorporate new technologies such as email discussion lists and the WWW. The new program will be a mixture of on-line materials and face-to-face workshops which ensure information is available to the large number of staff involved in postgraduate supervision. To register your interest in this program contact James Rendell on ext. 1-6477

James Rendell ensures the smooth running of the Postgraduate Supervisors' Development Program

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CTL Bookshelf

The CTL Bookshelf presents a selection of materials on aspects of teaching and learning available in the CTL Resource Room. These include titles on personal and professional development, as well as quality and evaluation issues. University of Sydney academics are invited to visit the CTL Resource Room and to consult with our staff on their interests.

Peter Kandlbinder, CTL Bookshelf Editor, email: synergy@itl.usyd.edu.au [mailto:synergy@itl.usyd.edu.au]

CLINICAL EDUATION

Facilitating Learning in Clinical Settings
McAllister, L., Lincoln, M., McLeod, S. & Moloney, D. (1997)
Cheltenham, UK: Stanley Thornes.

This edited book explores the unique context of teaching and learning in the clinical setting. Through chapters contributed by academics and clinical educators from different disciplines, the book provides a philosophy and framework on which to base the practical activities of teaching and learning in clinical education. The book exemplifies a learner-centred approach in clinical education through its use of central case study and the explicit linking of

theory with practical strategies. The contributors draws on their wealth of expertise as "teacher-mangers" of clinical education in sharing teaching and learning strategies which have been successfully applied in a wide range of clinical education settings. The book will be of particular interest to clinical educators in the Health Science disciplines seeking to ground their educational practice in adult learning principles.

EVALUATIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS PROGRAM

The Direct and Indirect Costs of Implementing Problem-based Learning into professional Courses within Universities
Aldred, S., Aldred, M., Walsh, L. & Dick, B. (1997)
Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Publishing Service

The purpose of this report was to examine the implementation of problem-based learning into subjects within professional education courses in the University of Queensland. It concludes that direct costs were not seen to be a major factor in the implementation of PBL and any obstacles in this regard where able to be overcome. However they stress that the quality of student learning needs to be the deciding factor in the choice of delivery modes. Otherwise, the report states, direct costs will have an adverse effect on implementing PBL as the reduced staff costs of didactic modes of teaching will be favoured tight budgetary circumstances.

On the other hand, a number of indirect costs were found to influence the long term success of PBL. These included the professional development of staff, educational leadership, institutional support, resources and the physical architecture.

The report emphasises that its recommendations could apply to any form of student-centred learning but warns that students uncomfortable with self-directed learning will no longer be adequately prepared for the professions. The report contains 9 major recommendations and 47 Bibliographic references

TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Professional Engineering
Baillie, C. McHugh, P. & Davies, W. (1995)
Canberra, ACT: Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching

This coursebook is for a first year introductory course in engineering designed to develop a deeper understanding of the important social concepts of

their future profession. Based on the course "Professional Engineering" introduced by the Department of Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering, it aims to help students to communicate, manage projects, work with others in a team, research, find creative solutions to problems and understand the social and ethical impact of what they do.

Lecturers in this coursebook do not lecture but instead interact with the students. The program balances a substantial group work component with individual assignments and incorporates a variety of approaches to learning ranging from interviews to group problem-solving and role playing. In order to ensure an interactive style to the course large classes need to be broken into three smaller groups. These groups work concurrently on different topics and end with an oral presentation. Assessment is based on continuous formative assessment with feedback to the students.