

# PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

Exemplar contributed by **SMITHSON** and **GORBETT**, Oct 2011

This exemplar of Peer Review of Teaching is strongly aligned with two core principles in Australian Universities; the enhancement of teaching and learning as its primary purpose, and the affirmation of good practice and of areas with potential to further develop.

The review focused on teaching delivery in *Principles of Pharmacotherapeutics for Nurse Practitioners NS5910* distance mode, and the evaluation of its effectiveness to enhance students' connection with the subject and its resources. A strategic shift in focus away from content, to learning tasks that demonstrate the application of content, has recently been embedded in teaching delivery for this subject, which boasts a broad geographical distribution of students. This PRoT reviews the effectiveness of a fresh teaching approach to delivery of course content, and increased student involvement in the subject.

Two categories of teaching activity are contained within this PRoT process: teaching development and evaluation of its effectiveness. *Figure 1* shows a timeline of activities and actions that were necessary to support this reflection.

## Timeline

29-Jun	Initiate action to resolve identified problem with student engagement																																								
2-Aug	Brainstorm, provide recommendations and propose solutions																																								
5-Sep	Implement changes and collaborate with colleague to review design and progress																																								
7-Sep	Make further recommendations to enhance program delivery																																								
29-Sep	Observe outcomes																																								
2-Oct	Establish contact in the interest of PRoT and acknowledge acceptance. Give Reviewer access to subject outline and all necessary content on LearnJCU																																								
14-Oct	Forward and receive PRoT Form A, wherein agreed aspects, access and expectations are detailed																																								
19-Oct	Review: John Smithson's Office, 9:00 am																																								
19-Oct	Reflect on PRoT process and activity on day of Review																																								
24-Oct	On Form B, detail verbal feedback given at review, and reflect on the process and activity																																								
25-Oct	Reflect on written comments provided by Reviewer																																								
26-Oct	Debrief and discuss final thoughts with Reviewer. Record keeping.																																								
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Time in minutes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Phase 1</td> <td>Plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>90</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>30</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phase 2</td> <td>Review</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phase 3</td> <td>Reflect/Action</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>75</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>30</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Total Hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>6.75</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>5.50</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Time in minutes		Phase 1	Plan		20		60		60		60		90		10		30		60		60	Phase 2	Review		60		60	Phase 3	Reflect/Action		75		30	Total Hours			6.75		5.50
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Figure 1: Timeline and activities that shape this PRoT

Via Movi technology and an acceptance of my request to observe the PRoT activity from afar, I am enlightened for the experience of being able to chart this Peer Review of Teaching in its unfolding. TLD Best Practice Project, PO Jackie Simoes

For further information about any aspect of this Peer Review of Teaching, please call the Reviewee, John Smithson on 4781 6963

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## Reviewees Reflection

Looking back, the first reflections had taken place without having thought of peer review at all. It was just the understanding I had a problem with engaging students in this particular subject and seeking out somebody who could provide some additional expertise or fresh ideas. It seemed natural given Phil's expertise as an educational designer, that I consulted him on the redevelopment of the subject. Therefore it seemed fitting that he reviewed the changes I made.

The process today felt much less like a review of my work and much more like a discussion between two colleagues. I didn't feel I was being graded, it felt like a natural discussion about some different aspects of my work relating to a defined area. I set the parameters and provided the materials for review, we focused on the concerns I had; those I thought would best improve me as a teacher, and so I felt the process was focused and controlled from the beginning.

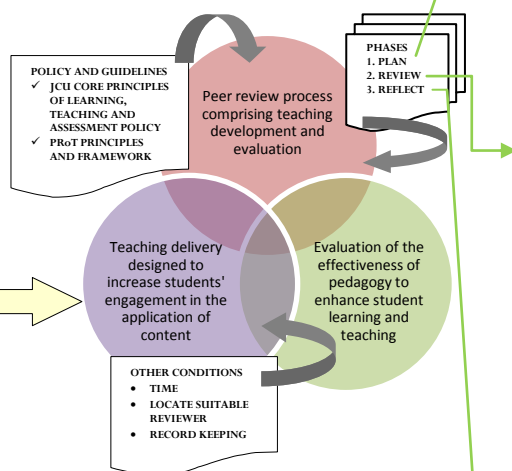


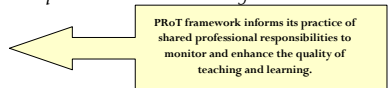
Diagram 1: Context for Peer Review of Teaching

## Reviewers Reflection

The PRoT 'package' that supports the process is very good, very well considered, and does provide a stepwise process that takes both the reviewer and reviewee from initial contact to the completion of the process. Perhaps a teaching 'checklist' or survey could be included to provide a common metric across all reviews.

The peer review activity was very constructive. There are probably peer reviews that are less so for the reviewer, but in this case, the review essentially worked as a peer review of my activities as well. That is arguably the true value of the peer review process: in reflecting on the reviewee's teaching, it informs both the reviewee and the reviewer of their strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Having said that, the review in this instance provided affirmation that the instructor was highly engaged in the scholarship of teaching.

The review activity was not onerous or confronting in this case, but there is arguably potential for this. The use of video based simulations of review scenarios could be very useful in establishing a PRoT 'best practice'. In the case of this specific review, the reviewee clearly took ownership of the review and in general, of the process itself. Hence this instance would likely produce a positive outcome in terms of continuous improvement, but such an assumption does not necessarily follow if either party did not fully support the process and the event itself.



## SUMMARY AND DISSEMINATION OF JOHN'S PRoT

FORM A: Aspects of teaching that were reviewed included the effectiveness of the subject strategy to:

- Engage with students that are geographically spread.
- Employ communication tools in LearnJCU.
- Respond to students needs as they develop.

The subject structure was redesigned to align content material with tasks to improve student engagement. This came about through enhancement-led reflective changes in teaching to improve student learning outcomes (CP9). Effective implementation of a course design schema improved student participation in tasks that: embedded meaningful learning experiences thereby making the course more student centred (CP7); increased opportunities for students to engage in and form partnerships with their peers, and the instructor (CP3); promoted critical thinking, self-managed learning, and professional communication with others in the field (CP8), fostered meta-cognitive building of discipline knowledge and facilitation of independent research. Form A: The Review Plan listed agreed upon details, expectations and responsibilities to focus the review, details of which are referred to throughout this chart and in *Figure 1*: Timeline

FORM B: *Diagram 1* illustrates the PRoT context that contains both teaching development and an evaluation of the effectiveness of pedagogy in general to enhance student communication through: social discourse; feedback; discussion with peers and between student and the instructor, thereby engaging students in open communication (CP8). The reviewer observed that at all times, the reviewee's decision to make changes or not to make changes, came from a position of improving students' learning and to facilitate their transition from novice to expert in a professional capacity (CP9). More specific affirmations for good practice were that the Reviewee:

- encouraged students to provide feedback to make the course better for them; communications were built on a foundation of trust and mentorship as a professional (CP3)
- built in problem solving and explorative learning to encourage student engagement both individually and as part of a collaborative and cooperative unit
- supported students in self managing their study
- created a course design that is easy to navigate and easily portable to other courses (CP7)

Further feedback that supports development in areas that show potential included observations:

- that the course navigational schema and 'how to video' could be used in subsequent instantiations of the course as well as the general design of the assessment strategies
- about the potential use of early warning tools in LearnJCU to identify disengaged or struggling students
- that assessment feedback provided to students was focused and comprehensive, but time consuming and that the use of a marking rubric would save time and benefit students understanding

FORM B: The Review detailed the focus of its evaluation in areas of course design, course implementation and general observations about the effectiveness of pedagogy to engage students in supported flexible learning.

FORM C: Reflection and Action (CP3 and CP7)

- The subject structure worked well to improve student engagement in course content, and it has strong applicability in the subject that follows and in some face-to-face undergraduate teaching.
- There is an opportunity in 2012 to use early warning tools within LearnJCU.
- The 'how to' video that navigates the structure of the course to support students better, could be expanded to discussion boards.
- Early set up issues on discussion boards have been identified and rectified to make the process simpler.
- Reviewee has informed the Head of School that PRoT has been successfully conducted and support for such has been forwarded to PMP.