Forum:

Communication as a graduate quality - how can its development by embedded into curriculum?

Program and Abstracts
## Communication as a graduate quality – how can its development be embedded into curriculum?

**PROGRAM**  Monday 18 July 2016, Room 448 Old Teachers’ College

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Pedagogy, practices and language as a social semiotic: how meanings are made in university study and the implications for embedding language development across the curriculum

Over a ten-year period at The Open University, UK, Coffin and Donohue developed an approach to language and learning which they describe in their book, A language as social semiotic-based approach to teaching and learning in higher education (2014). Two years ago, Donohue moved to join the Thinking Writing team at Queen Mary University of London. In this presentation, Julian Ingle will set the scene for the work that Thinking Writing have done in the collaborative development of writing, teaching and learning at Queen Mary. Jim Donohue will then present the Language as Social Semiotic (LASS) approach outlined in Coffin and Donohue (2014) and consider how the LASS approach is transferring into the new contexts of Thinking Writing at Queen Mary.

The broad objectives of the Thinking Writing team are similar to those that Donohue had pursued in The Open University – to collaborate with disciplinary specialists in the development of writing and hence in the development of teaching and learning. In considering how the LASS approach has fared in the transition, the presentation will outline the different lines of research that the LASS approach builds on. These can be summarised as: i) the linguistic analysis of disciplinary meaning making informed by systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004); ii) research into students’ predispositions towards making particular kinds of meanings - their ‘semantic orientations’ (Hasan 2011); and iii) research into ‘semiotic mediation’ (Hasan, 2011, Vygotsky, 1978), the ways in which language mediates meanings to the mind in teaching and learning interactions, and in relation to this, the value of ‘metasemiotic mediation’, the explicit bringing to awareness of how meanings are made by teachers and learners.

The presentation will propose that the core insight of SFL - that language is a social semiotic which fuses linguistic form and meaning - is a ‘threshold concept’ which is therefore transformative but also ‘troublesome’ (Meyer & Land, 2005). In effect, this social semiotic perspective shifts the attention away from language or writing development to meaning development. For both writing specialists and subject specialists, this may entail significant paradigm shifts.

References


Annie Chan and Robyn Johnson  
Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney  
CECLD

**Developing clinical report writing in speech pathology students**

To graduate, speech pathology students must demonstrate excellent professional communication skills in all areas. This presentation describes the support given to developing one aspect of students' communication, clinical report writing, over the course of their degree. This is a complex task: students must develop the ability to accurately synthesise and present information from multiple sources. The communication difficulties of speech pathology clients mean our reports must be clear, concise and adapted for their needs. We pair learning to write clinical reports with learning to assess clients' communication, in three broad stages: novice (early undergraduate and masters students); intermediate (third year undergraduate and second semester masters students); and advanced (final year in both degrees). At each stage, students receive appropriate formative feedback.

Novice students are taught basic principles in clinical lectures. They conduct partial assessments or use cases to analyse results and write simple reports.

Intermediate students attend workshops before their first 'real' client assessment. They produce more complex professional clinical writing, using a scaffold to synthesise results from two assessments into a report. Advanced students further develop report writing within their placements, which in the on-campus clinic includes workshops. Students synthesise results from multiple assessments, use high-level reasoning skills to decide the complexity of language and vocabulary, and write to the requirements of their placement site. They demonstrate deep knowledge and thinking, and advanced linguistic prowess through their clarity, conciseness and coherence.

This structure has allowed us to ensure our graduates meet the requirements of our professional body.
Susan Coulson  
Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney

**Embedding the development of communication into undergraduate physiotherapy curriculum in the Faculty of Health Sciences through a digital blended media assessment.**

Physiotherapists are integral members of multidisciplinary healthcare teams managing a broad range of disorders. These teams operate in face to face interactions and online environments where effective communication is essential for best practice patient management.

Undergraduate physiotherapy students at the University of Sydney performed an assessment task using blended digital media to provide an appreciation of physiotherapy in the management of multisystem problems and to facilitate communication of theoretical, assessment, treatment and clinical reasoning concepts in a manner that could be easily understood by the majority of the educated lay public. A further purpose of this blended media assessment was to enable students to engage in producing a digital explanation which integrated different media forms as a new learning and presentation approach.

Seventeen groups of 4-5 students were allocated a topic that that been covered in this new curriculum UoS, PHTY3086: PT in MultiSystems in semester 2, 2015. Topics included areas in which physiotherapists are involved with such as breast cancer, palliative care, burns, whiplash, amputation and aged care. As the human face is one of the main vehicles of communication, this presentation will focus on the assessments which covered multidisciplinary management of facial nerve disorders such as Bell’s palsy and surgical removal of acoustic neuroma.

The effectiveness of this method of embedding the development of communication into the PHTY3016 curriculum will be presented via quotes from individual student and staff reflections.
Integrated academic writing and assessment in an indigenous health course.

The Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion, available only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, is run in Block mode (six blocks of 7-10 days across one year). Course participants always come with extensive professional skills and experience in health and with the support of their communities but may have had limited previous exposure to academic literacies, including writing valued academic text types. We were adamant that students needed to be formally taught these skills, rather than relying on learning them by osmosis, and that these skills should be closely integrated with content and assessment, so that discipline-specific text types, grammatical structures, engagement with evidence and vocabulary could be addressed as well as the genre and informational requirements of the assessment task. One work-and community-integrated assessment task was developed for the whole year, avoiding fragmentation across blocks. It includes a range of activity and assessment types, for example self- and peer assessment. It allows for a gradual development of skills over time and provides the structuring principle for the academic literacies sessions. We were able to work as an interdisciplinary team (an Aboriginal academic specializing in health promotion and an academic with a background in ESL teaching) to bring this about. The session will show how this integrated program was designed and will report on student evaluation of these initiatives.
Jo Lander  
Sydney School of Public Health, The University of Sydney  
CECLD

Kirsty Foster  
Sydney Medical School, The University of Sydney  
CECLD

Sean Seeho  
Northern Clinical School, The University of Sydney  
CECLD

‘The burden was less’: an integrated research and writing skills workshop delivered in the Philippines.

The nature and effectiveness of research training, including the place of academic writing, is currently much debated (and often found wanting) in developed countries. Less is known about research training in Asia. In the specific case of the Philippines, it is clear that Universities in the Philippines are ‘at a critical stage in their efforts to enhance research and improve research training’ (Calma 2010 p213); this goes beyond funding issues to include ‘interest, motivation and required competence’ (Calma 2010 p223).

This three-day workshop was funded by SSEAC to address research skills capacity building as well as the disadvantage faced by non-native English speakers seeking to publish in prestigious English-language journals (eg Flowerdew, 2007). Rather than teach research and writing skills separately and sequentially, these were integrated using the sections of a standard research paper as a means of structuring the sequence of teaching activities. Skills learnt were immediately applied, with participants working in interdisciplinary groups to define problems, formulate questions, write an introduction and so on. This reduced the burden of first learning theoretically how to do research then later doing it and writing it up. This session will demonstrate the workshop’s design, provide evaluation data and suggest aspects we might handle differently next time.

PMC : Communication as a Lifeline

Communication is a key element of patient outcomes in Health Care, and over the years, both the clinical and academic teaching faculties have become increasingly aware of the importance of this set of skills. The ability to teach these skills is inconsistent, due to a combination of

- understanding of the topic
- priority of teaching
- existing tools available
- validity of learning and assessment
- resources available and
- confidence in “expert” ability

At the Pam McLean Centre, we have specialized in developing communication skills within the Health Care sector, across all levels, specialties and disciplines. We use a number of educational pedagogies

- constructivism
- motivational science and sociocognitive constructs
- reflective practice and metacognition
- Kolb learning theory.

We have developed complex immersive simulation role play utilising professional staff to create safe environments to initiate behavioral and cultural change. More recently, we have engaged with modern learning methodology, including narrative driven videos, and e-learning– using techniques and tools from medical simulation and education theory, higher education theory, psychological models, dramaturgy, teleconferencing, automated behavioural analysis tools, social media tools, crowdsourcing, and real time data learning analytics. At SMS, we run 3 separate full year cohort simulation/role play activities on an annual basis, with 2 other voluntary workshops, as well as developing new online activities. We are finalizing a new curriculum which is integrated into existing coursework to complement other elements of teaching, and have launched, in 2016, a Faculty Prize for Excellence in Clinical Communication, which requires a series of both written, and face to face activities.
Diagnostic Radiography Students' Clinical Communication Skills

Background/Aims: Excellent communication skills are an essential component of the patient/practitioner relationship, and have been shown to contribute to the delivery of high standards of patient care (Johnson et al., 2013; Reinders et al, 2010). The development of high level communication skills is a core curriculum component in the Master of Diagnostic Radiography (MDR) program at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney with communication skills being taught across the continuum of novice to entry level practitioner.

This presentation will showcase the re-design of a foundational communication assessment in the 1st year cohort of the Master of Diagnostic Radiography program. The aim of the revised assessment task was to assess student's communication skills in a 'real time' setting, thus ensuring fitness to practice this component of radiography safely in the clinical environment.

Methods: 76 1st year MDR students completed an oral viva examination in Semester 1 2016 assessing a student’s ability to obtain a clinical history from a simulated patient utilising a set template of questions. Students’ verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills were assessed, including the student’s ability to build rapport with the patient. This is in contrast to previous cohorts where students were required to submit a videoed encounter of themselves obtaining a clinical history from a patient, with students being able to practice this skill an unlimited amount of times before submission, in addition to formulating their own script of patient responses.

Results: Analysis of student results from both assessment methods is currently underway, in addition to the comparison of communication items in the clinical supervisors' assessment report. Student satisfaction with both assessment methods will be explored via the Unit of Study Survey. It is anticipated that results will be presented at this forum.

Conclusion: Results obtained will be used to inform the further development of this foundational communication assessment task.

References:

Johnson, L., Gorman, C., Morse, R., Firth, M. & Rushbrooke, S. (2013). Does communication skills training make a difference to patients’ experiences of consultations in oncology and palliative care services? European Journal of Cancer Care, 22, 202-209.

Alison Purcell¹, Julia Blackford², Tina Barclay², Sonya Corcoran², Merrolee Penman³, Rowanne Couch⁴, Lindy McAllister², Corinne Caillaud⁵
Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney

¹Discipline of Speech Pathology, ²Education Design, ³Work Integrated Learning, ⁴Learning and Teaching and ⁵Discipline of Exercise and Sport Science.

Accelerate Communication Excellence (ACE)

For health students working in clinical situations, it is essential to develop and demonstrate high communication competence. Students working clinically with individuals from social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own require even higher levels of communication competence. Failing to achieve this required level of communication competence is a barrier to clinical success and puts students at risk of slower academic progression (Atrill et al., 2011; Higgs et al., 2008). Students from minority social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds are at even higher risk of failing clinical placements due to their communication competence (Atrill et al., 2012). In order to address this risk and support student learning, we developed a framework for professional communication excellence. Our approach is to offer support to any first year student in need in the Faculty.

To embed communication as a graduate quality and to grow or accelerate the professional communication competence of all Faculty of Health Science first year students the Faculty has developed the Accelerate Communication Excellence (ACE) Program. ACE is a two part program consisting of a diagnostic tool and additional learning support. ACE: Diagnostic is an online program designed to develop, assess and provide feedback on professional communication to novice students. The areas of professional communication are reading, writing, listening, speaking and reasoning. Beyond its role as a “diagnostic tool”, ACE: Diagnostic is a learning opportunity which supports self-assessment. ACE: Learning Support is a 0 CP/0 fee unit of study offered in the Winter semester for students identified as needing additional support following completion of the ACE: Diagnostic tool. This paper will present the ACE program and provide results of the pilot study conducted with 320 first year Faculty of Health Science students in semester 1, 2016. Validity of the ACE program will also be presented.


Marie Stevenson  
Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney  

Alyson Simpson  
Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney  

Bronwyn James  
Learning Centre, The University of Sydney  

Arlene Harvey  
Learning Centre, The University of Sydney  

**Texts and expectations: Students-as-researchers**

In this presentation, we report on a unit, Texts and Expectations, designed to support undergraduate students in engaging effectively with their assessment tasks and curriculum artefacts and developing their academic literacies. The development of this unit is a collaborative project between the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the Learning Centre at the University of Sydney.

The unit takes an ethnographic approach in which the starting point is the student-as-researcher. It provides students with knowledge, strategies and tasks through which they investigate reading and writing within their disciplines and reflect on themselves as readers and writers. The unit raises students’ awareness of expectations in their disciplines regarding academic reading and writing, the range of genres they are likely to encounter, and the language features typically associated with these genres.

In the presentation, we will outline how we see this student-as-researcher approach as contributing to the development of communication in the curriculum, and the embedding of academic literacy in this curriculum. We will share our experiences in piloting the unit, discussing both the strengths and pitfalls, and how these experiences are shaping the further development of the unit.
Lee Stickells  
Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, The University of Sydney

Dorothy Economou  
Learning Centre, The University of Sydney

Academic Integrity as a core communication capability in undergraduate studies: one case of embedded communication development

This paper will showcase one component of a larger ongoing project to embed development of communication as a graduate quality into first-year undergraduate studies in the Architecture Faculty. The focus here will be the first stage of the project - the embedding of knowledge and skills required to ensure academic integrity in written communication as required in the Unit of Study - BDES1011 Architectural History and Theory.

Working in collaboration, the two presenters have embedded this foundational communication component in both face-to-face sessions within regular lectures and in associated online resources within the Unit of Study website. The paper will elaborate on the design and content of both face-face and online components, illustrating the student tasks and the supportive pre- and post-task resources. The rationale for decisions made regarding content, design and execution of this initiative will also be outlined. Finally, tutor and lecturer feedback, and the results of student evaluations of this embedded communication component will be presented and discussed.