Peer review in online and blended learning environments: extending the learning conversations in an Australian regional university

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Google Maps

Yr: 2014
14,669 students

- Distance Education: 43%
- Lismore Campus: 26%
- Gold Coast Campus: 21%
- Coffs Harbour Campus: 10%
Outline

- Background and (key) literature
- The learning conversations
- 2014 OLT Project
- 2015 CTL Project
- Conclusion
Key prior ALTC/OLT projects

- *Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education* (2008)

- *Social, Communicative and Interpersonal Leadership in the Context of Peer Review* (2009)

- *Peer Review in Online and Blended Learning Environments* (2011)
Embedding a peer review culture in online and blended teaching and learning contexts at 2 universities
3 project aims (2014 & 2015)

1. **Facilitation of professional development** in blended and online learning and teaching practice

2. **Enabling a sharing of practice** about learning and teaching in blended and online environments across two universities (*the regional university*); and

3. **Develop a culture where conversational peer review supports and encourages the development of professional practice** around learning and teaching for blended and online environments
(Informal) learning conversations

Focus on having a conversation rather than a discussion – it is important to ask questions and explore answers rather than provide knowledge or definitive explanations.

A conversation between two professionals which can promote learning - both peers are equally open to professional learning.

Both are peers, equals in the process, where the power relationship is one of equality.

Underpinning this approach is the idea of a conversation that goes beyond an exchange of facts and ideas – a conversation that can transform these, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought – a collaborative inquiry process.

There is also the idea of “reciprocity” – an opportunity for learning when both parties accept the peer review space that has been created as one for mutual or reciprocal learning.
Consider Peer Review a cycle …

Why

What

YOU!

How

Prompt questions

Learning conversations

Reporting

Follow-up

WITH YOUR REVIEWER!
Approach … Resource Kit

Why? What is the purpose of your review?

What? What do you want to learn about your teaching and/or your students’ learning?

How? What is the process?

Prompt questions: To guide the focus of your peer review.

Learning conversations: Approach to giving feedback.

Reporting: How are the results of the conversation to be communicated?

Follow-up: Questions and actions to think about after the review and learning conversation.
2014 OLT project

- 10 person project team: SCU (5), UQ (4), MQ expert
- Blackboard LMS site:
  - documentation repository, wiki & DF
  - meeting agendas & minutes
  - Ethics documentation
  - annotated bibliography to assist scholarship
  - Interviews, video case studies
2014 OLT project participation

- Invitations from School learning leader; promoted via email & School meetings
- 15 total: Southern Cross Business School (7), School of Population Health (8)
- Feb Orientations & Resource Kit led to reviewee/reviewer (self) selection
  - SPH: 4 pairs
  - SCBS: 2 pairs & 1 trio

All this activity was face-to-face on a single campus
2014 OLT project outputs

- Aug Dissemination workshops
  - SPH: 8 attendees
  - SCU: 40 attendees from all Schools
- Report to Sept SCU Scholarship of Teaching Symposium (76 attendees)

**Aug/Sep SCU attendance provided incentive for 2015**

- Paper to Oct European Conference on E-Learning
- Final OLT Extension Grant Report
2014 OLT project feedback

- Overall very positive (SPH and SCBS)
- All completed project, though several noted time issues
- All completed post-interviews (2 were videoed)
- 50% used wiki; others email or other tools more convenient

- **Value of informal conversations**
Range of matters reviewed

- Trust in ability/expertise of reviewer
- Realising own “expertise”
- Value of being reviewer AND reviewee
- **Challenge of formalising the informal ... capturing the conversations**
2015?

- Potential SOTL publications
- Peer Review BB Wiki/BB Collaborate room:
  - build community of practice
  - exploration space (repository & literature)
  - initiation space
  - conversation space
  - reflective space

Build repository & annotated literature
What changed for 2015?

2014 participants to determine key dates

◦ Email & School meeting invitations to staff (early Feb)
◦ Orientations (same Resource Kit) mid-March
◦ Conclude peer review conversations by 17 August (wk 9)
Which Schools?

- 18 Participants from 4 (of 6) Schools:
  - Business & Tourism (8)
    - 3 former Business; 5 former
  - Health & Human Sciences (5)
  - Law & Justice (4)
  - Education (1)

4 groups of three

- 2 across; 1 same School
- 3 across; 1 same School
Orientation … Resource Kit

Locations **face-to-face at two** of the 3 campuses AND **one online (Collaborate)** – 18 volunteers

- Gold Coast Beachside (17 Mar)
  - 3 volunteers + 3 project team
- Lismore (18 Mar)
  - 3 volunteers + 2 project team
- **Collaborate online (24 Mar) - recorded**
  - 8 volunteers + 4 project team
  - (accessed recording) 4 volunteers + 3 project team
Blackboard site

pairs/trios
Conclusions so far ...

process (7 from 2014 + 8 from 2015) with unique issues
outcome?

a self-sustaining community of practice?
All the best ... many small steps ...

Hope you find what you are looking for!