SYDNEY TEACHING COLLOQUIUM 2014

Symposium
Assessing for Learning: The Irony and the Ecstasy

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Abstract
This Symposium aligns with several Colloquium themes. It presents a set of standards, and an ‘assessment-for-learning’ model for assessment that together provide a framework for promoting students’ engagement in learning. The framework includes setting relevant assessment tasks, providing future-oriented feedback, and discussing assessment criteria and standards with students. The symposium will use the framework to address two questions. First, ‘What constitutes good assessment practice?’ The set of standards and the model that make up the framework are derived from good practice examples or case studies of units of study from a range of disciplinary contexts. The units of study in the case studies have been identified using evidence about the quality of students' learning experience in the units from the Unit of Study Evaluation system. The standards and model also correspond well with the literature on effective assessment in higher education. In this Symposium the audience will be asked to work in groups to choose one of the criteria and standards from a ‘matrix tool’ and discuss how they could be applied to inform assessment practice and curriculum renewal in their context(s). The secondary question or dilemma to be addressed is, ‘How can applying the standards and following the model successfully to enhance students’ achievement be reconciled with the expectation that only some students achieve high standards?’. Applying the standards effectively for a student cohort could lead to increases in the proportion of students achieving higher grades. The irony is that efforts to enhance the standard of assessment practice to enhance students’ achievement could be hindered by grading moderation intended to ‘assure’ the quality of that achievement. Participants can expect to acquire greater understanding of assessment for learning practices, and ideas and tips for renewing and enhancing the standard of assessment design in their contexts.

Theme
Assessment that engages students in learning that is relevant to the disciplinary, professional and community contexts (theme 1)