SYDNEY TEACHING COLLOQUIUM 2014

Practice example
Inclusive Assessments: Online Modules for Supporting Inclusive Teaching

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Abstract
Initiatives to widen participation in higher education in Australia have led to increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student bodies (Haggis, 2007). University teachers report challenges in creating inclusive learning environments (including assessment tasks and scaffolding resources) to support the diversity of students in engaging with learning at a higher education level (Northedge, 2003). In particular, health science students need to master effective communication in professional and lay language. The challenge for academics is how to teach these skills to students with low language proficiency and develop appropriate assessment tasks.

This presentation will showcase an online package of strategies to support teachers in creating and scaffolding assessments for health students which are inclusive for those with low language proficiency. Staff participating in the assessment components of the communication module will learn strategies which will translate into structuring assessments to clearly communicate the requirements to students and to appropriately assess their communication skills.

Issues addressed in these modules were drawn from a survey of Faculty of Health Sciences academics about challenges faced when teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Specific strategies and examples addressing these concerns were drawn from experiences of high school English as a Second Language teachers, the Centre for English Teaching at the University of Sydney, literature and good practice by Health Sciences teachers, including Vice Chancellor Teaching award winners.

The four modules are: creating an inclusive physical and virtual environment to support learning and assessment; recognising and supporting students at risk of failing; inclusive teacher and student communication in assessments; and cultural awareness in learning and assessment. It is anticipated that academics will be able to integrate learning from these modules into the assessment tasks for their units of study.

We are currently in the implementation and evaluation stage of this package. Staff interested in using the modules are invited to complete pre- and post-surveys of their teaching self-efficacy and a reflection of the modules’ perceived helpfulness and applicability. Preliminary evaluation data will be presented at the Colloquium.

This interactive presentation will invite participants to engage with the modules and partake in demonstrations of the strategies discussed in the online package. We ask that staff bring their own mobile device to the session to participate.

References


sydney.edu.au/itl/stc2014/
Theme
Assessment that engages students in learning that is relevant to the disciplinary, professional and community contexts (theme 1)