How to integrate English language communication into course curricula

Students develop their English language communication alongside their increasing knowledge and understanding of discipline content. Academic staff can support this development in a number of practical ways. Guidelines for the development of students’ academic and professional communication are available here in the box on the right.

Here are some strategies academic staff can use to implement these guidelines:

- set a low stakes discipline-based assignment early in a unit of study to provide both students and staff with feedback on students’ English language communication
- adopt a chunking approach to further assessment tasks so that learning is scaffolded and feedback on both content and communication can be given during this process
- include communication outcomes in program and unit learning objectives and, most importantly, in assessment criteria
- provide exemplars as part of a learning activity for students to devise assessment criteria that include communication criteria
- address communication in curriculum review and design
- collaborate with language and learning academics to embed communication into course curricula (see the Learning Centre Resources page for a number of online resources developed collaboratively with discipline staff)

A recently completed Office for Learning and Teaching project in this area (‘Degrees of proficiency: Building a strategic approach to university students’ English language assessment and development’) offers further advice. The project website provides a summary of current institutional approaches, identifies effective practice and offers guidelines for developing a strategic institutional approach. Helen Drury, from the Learning Centre, was part of the project team. The Learning Centre has a long history of collaborating with academic staff to integrate English language communication into curricula. Please contact the Learning Centre if you would like more information.