

OLT Workshop

Adelaide 17 March 2015

Dr Peter Hill, Central Queensland University

Contact: p.hill@cqu.edu.au phone: (08) 8378 4544 (x4544)

1. Excellence

Characteristics of excellent teaching

Excellent teachers have/are/do:

Area	Attributes/Attitude	Approaches / Practices
Discipline / subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An in-depth subject knowledge. • An ability to simplify and clarify complex subjects • Think about their own thinking ('meta-cognition') within the discipline. • Aim to make recognised contributions to the learning, teaching and assessment of the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop techniques that will assist students to grasp principles and to organise concepts. • Promote meaningful learning by facilitating sustained and substantial influences on the way people think, act and feel. • Regularly update knowledge.
Learning and Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe that teaching is as intellectually demanding and important as their research and other scholarly activities. • Enthusiastic and energetic. • Student-centred. • Creative and innovative in the design and planning of learning activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a scholarly approach to preparation and practice. • Begin with questions about student learning objectives and establish explicit learning outcomes. • Explore and develop methods and learning resources appropriate to their specific context. • Respond to changes in the specific context to keep aims, approach and practice and outcomes aligned. • Evidence-based evaluation of activity and outcomes.
Expectations of students as learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expectations. • Expect 'more' of students, in terms of stimulating high achievement. • Aim to facilitate 'deep' (rather than 'surface' or 'strategic') learning experiences in the subject area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep students and their learning to the fore. • Effectively communicate expectations to students. • Adopt learning objectives that embody the kind of thinking and acting expected for life. • Promote interactivity rather than passivity in learning activities. • Students assessment linked to primary learning objectives.
Support for students as learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that students learn by confronting intriguing, beautiful, or consequential problems. • Understand and support the need for students to feel a sense of control over their education. • Respect and acknowledge student diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a natural critical learning environment. • Adopt authentic tasks that will challenge students to grapple with ideas, rethink their assumptions, and examine their mental models of reality. • Facilitate collaborative work. • Reinsure students that their work will be considered fairly and honestly. • Design and implement assessment, including formative tasks and feedback, that fosters learning. • Devise strategies to work effectively with diverse learning styles and characteristics. • Achieve added value/high retention rates with students suffering disadvantage.
Trust in students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat students with respect and decency. • Approachable and accessible. • Understand and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display openness with students. • Encourage students to be reflective and candid. • Support students to try, fail, and provide formative feedback in advance of and separate from any

	experiential learning.	summative assessment of their efforts.
Reflection and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically check their progress and evaluate their efforts. • Willing to confront own weaknesses and failings. • Don't blame the students for any difficulties encountered. • Authentic: find own genius by adjusting every idea to who they are and what they teach. • Identify themselves as learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek evaluative feedback from students. • Establish measures to evaluate practice and to evidence student learning outcomes. • Share ideas and reflect on practice and approaches with colleagues. • Evaluate and adopt innovative approaches that promise to enhance learning.
Institutional context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong sense of commitment to the academic community, seeing their own efforts as part of a larger educational enterprise. • Understand the context and mission of their institution. • Committed to teaching as a core scholarly activity integral to the educational, intellectual and social remit of higher education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and collaborate with colleagues. • Share and promote good practice. • Proactively champion quality learning and teaching within (and beyond) their institution.

Source: P.A.L. Hill, *The Australian Awards for University Teaching: A Manual for Nominees* (forthcoming).

2. Focus

Analysis of impact

Think about the concentric 'ripples' of people who have been, or who are, impacted by your contribution. Consider Nancy's contribution:

Example: Nancy's contribution

Reviewing student feedback comments from the previous five years, Nancy notices that her undergraduate students regularly remark on how she has helped to enthuse them concerning the field of study and stimulated their curiosity. She finds this gratifying, because seven years previously she started teaching a required disciplinary course, but one unpopular with students and with a reputation for being out-of-touch and boring. Student disinterest was reflected by an alarmingly high rate of attrition, and the generally poor assessment results obtained by those who lasted the distance. Being passionate about her discipline and believing in the potential of her students, Nancy made it her aim to find ways to engage students with the subject matter so as to appreciate its disciplinary importance but also to be drawn by its intrinsic fascination. To do this she developed a raft of innovative teaching approaches aimed at engaging students as learners.

Subsequently, for five years running, Nancy's students have reported a rate of overall satisfaction with the course that consistently ranks at the top of the departmental student evaluations. In course seminars students commonly remark on their fascination with the subject, and most elect to do a small research project as their final assessment item. Over the same period of time, student attrition in her course has steadily decreased, and is now at the lowest level of any course in the department. Nancy recently received an award from her institution

recognising her contribution to the institutional goal of improving student retention rates. The assessment results for her students customarily reflect a pattern of impressive in-depth subject knowledge, and a number of students who passed through the course have progressed to graduate and research studies in the subject area of the course.

Nancy's department colleagues comment frequently on the enthusiasm her students display for the course and on her teaching innovations. On a number of occasions they have invited her to present her approaches and practices at departmental learning and teaching workshops. She also has showcased her engaged learning approach at two institutional seminars. Colleagues have encouraged her to author a number of articles outlining her approach, and one article published in a major disciplinary journal has been extensively cited. Moreover, disciplinary peers in two other institutions, who have provided research supervision to a number of graduates from Nancy's course, have both provided unsolicited feedback complimenting her on the exemplary depth of subject knowledge her former students bring to their research candidacy.

1. Significant effects of Nancy's contribution include:

Undergraduates would say

as evidenced by

Graduates would say

as evidenced by

Colleagues in her department would say

as evidenced by

Institutional managers would say

as evidenced by

Disciplinary peers would say

as evidenced by

2. What commonalities (e.g. practice, resources, learning indicators) link the effects reported ?

3. What are the stand-out effects? Do they align with what Nancy intended to achieve?

4. Taking Q.2 & Q.3 together: What factor (aim, approach, quality of achievement, innovation, or long term effect) best epitomises Nancy's contribution?

5. So what particular focus does the answer to Q.4 suggest? _____

Note: Do formulate the focus in a short sentence (25 words max). Writing it down helps to ensure clarity and also will keep you on track.

Schematic structure of a focus statement

<i>Substantive clause</i>		<i>Instrumental or result clause</i>
' <u>substantive</u> (aim, activity)...	+	<u>by/through</u> (instrumental)...' or <u>in order to</u> (result)...'

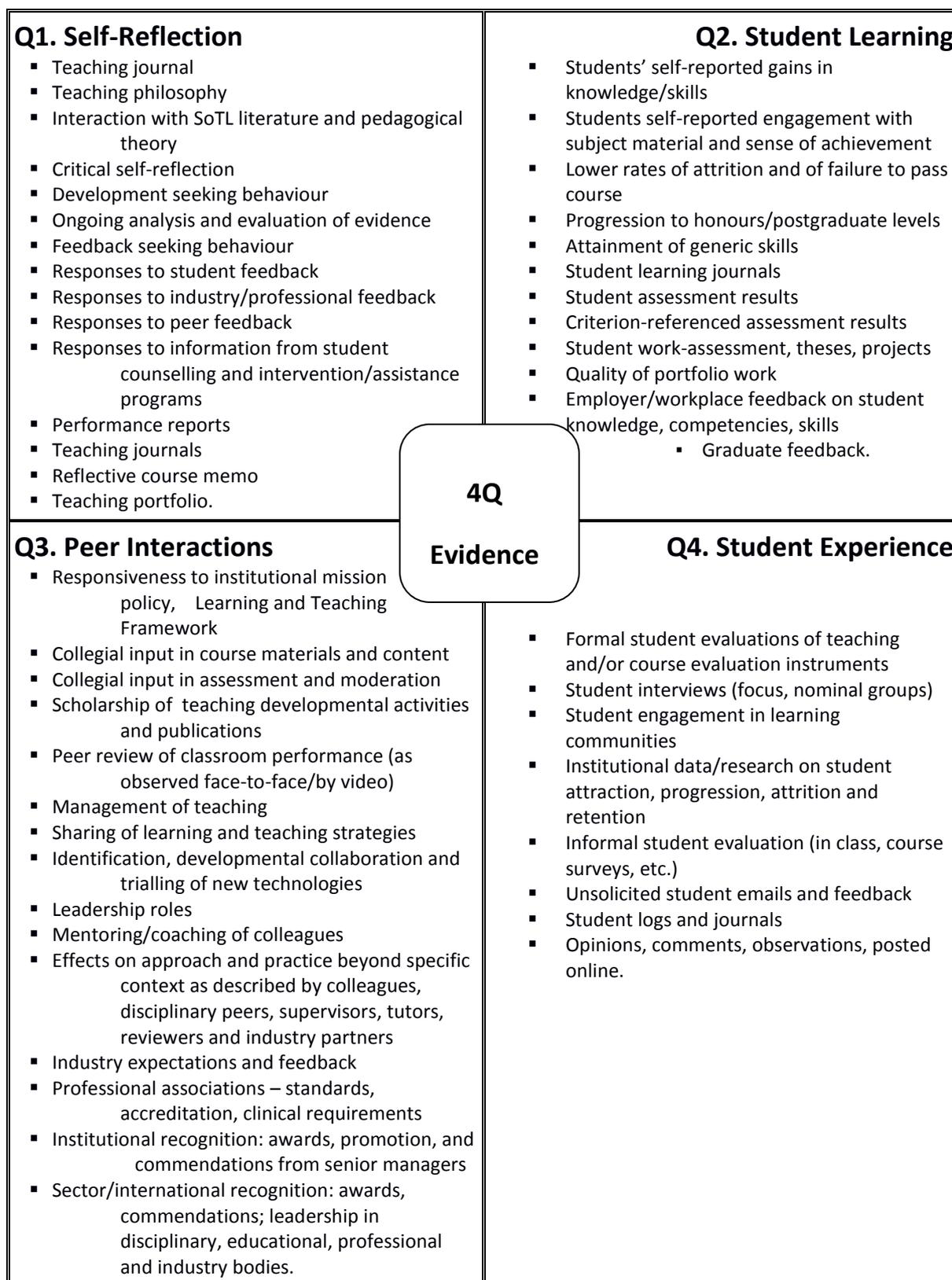
Examples:

- [Natural and Built Environments]: Facilitating proficiency in creative and sustainable approaches (*substantive*) that prepare students for contemporary industry practice (*result*).
- [Medicine]: Building competency for clear communication with patients (*substantive*) in order that students may develop as effective diagnosticians (*result*).
- [Librarians]: To enrich student knowledge acquisition and use (*substantive*) by facilitating confident and discerning information-seeking behaviour (*instrumental*).

3. Evidence (next page)

The 4Q Evidence Model

from P.A.L. Hill, *The Australian Awards for University Teaching: A Manual for Nominees* (forthcoming); after C. Smith and C. Nicholl.



Sources of evidence of institutional recognition

- Institutional awards related to the nominee's contribution.
- Promotion on the basis of, or partly based on, the nominee's contribution.
- Written acknowledgement from senior management of nominee's success with reporting against measurable objectives and/or priorities in the institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy or plans.
- Written commendations from senior management or other senior staff acknowledging the importance or benefits to the institution of the nominee's contribution.
- Acknowledgements of the nominee's contribution recorded in the minutes of institutional Councils, Senates, Academic Boards and strategic management committees.
- Invitations to present papers or to showcase practice at institutional learning and teaching forums.
- Invitations arising from the nominee's contribution to advise or mentor staff in other areas of the institution.
- Extended, increased or additional institutional funding for the continuance or expansion of an approach, resource or program initiated by the nominee.
- Adopting the nominee's contribution as a benchmark for practice and/or performance within the institution.
- Special mention of the nominee's contribution in quality assurance reviews or other institutional reviews and reports.

Note on the “sustained” nature of the contribution

Evidenced of the sustained nature of the contribution is not simply evidence of longevity but also of an ethos of continued improvement. Such sustained development will be in evidence wherever evidentiary items corroborate causal relationships between the development over time of the nominee's activity and measurably improved trends in the contingent student outcomes. Special attention might be given to adducing:

- Data collected from feedback seeking strategies and reiterative evaluation;
- Longitudinal quantitative data evidencing improvement in quality over time of given outcomes;
- Qualitative and quantitative data evidencing a chronology of challenges overcome and of subsequent highlights and achievements;
- Before and after testing practices linked to crucial stages of development;
- Described strategies over time for reflection in action (i.e. for evaluating practice and outcomes, identifying areas requiring improvement and ongoing reflection whilst implementing changes); and
- Qualified third-party testimony to the innovation, quality and/or improvement over time of particular approaches, activity and outcomes.