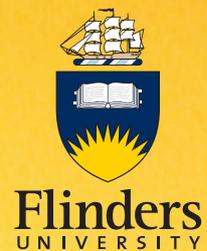


Perceptions on effective teaching and learning at Flinders University



October 2010

Perceptions on effective teaching and learning at Flinders University is a publication of the Reinventing Teaching Project team which is comprised of Flinders University staff who attended an Innovative Research Universities forum in 2007. The project investigated student and staff perceptions of optimal conditions for learning at Flinders University. All Flinders academic staff and students were invited to participate in the study through an online survey. Respondents consisted of 576 students and 126 staff. *Perceptions on effective teaching and learning at Flinders University* presents a selection of key findings reported by groups of students and staff in the 2009 online survey.

Effective teaching practice

Effective teaching practice refers to the strategies and techniques that create optimal learning opportunities that motivate and inspire learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Survey respondents identified effective teaching and learning practices to enhance learning and some of these are listed below.

- Providing timely feedback assisted learners in improving learning.
- Connecting learning outcomes with appropriate assessments facilitated learning.
- Demonstrating interest in student learning encouraged learners to approach teachers.
- Holding frequent teacher-student meetings to discuss student queries and concerns helped to guide learning.
- Organising lectures in a coherent format facilitated learning.
- Recognising the importance of regularly reviewing teaching helped to enhance learning.

Effective practices to motivate learning

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

The following strategies provide constructive feedback to facilitate student learning.

- Encourage students to improve various aspects of their writing by providing academic writing samples
- Provide a rubric that identifies grading criteria
- Provide useful feedback that is helpful in understanding the content
- Make suggestions that help students to achieve the learning outcomes
- Identify positive aspects of assignment submissions and offer encouraging comments

STRUCTURED AND ORGANISED LECTURES

Lectures that are organised in a coherent format aid learning in the following ways:

- Structured lesson plans allow learners to engage in their learning in a meaningful way
- Desired learning outcomes outlined in a structured lecture help learners to focus on important issues

- Face-to-face contact between student and teacher and between students are helpful to learners to seek clarifications about issues that are abstract and/or difficult to understand.
- Structured and organised lectures provide a broad framework and a conceptual one for thinking about a range of issues in a coherent way.
- Lectures that provide opportunities for learners to engage with the teacher and with other students create a conducive environment for learners.
- Lectures with real world examples are meaningful to learners in understanding their social and professional environments.
- Lectures that are read from prepared texts with little eye contact with students and with little opportunity for engaging in dialogue are much less effective in guiding learners to a deep understanding of concepts.



COLLABORATIVE AND PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES

The incorporation and encouragement of collaboration and problem solving strategies into teaching practice were identified by respondents as useful in enhancing learning. They should be used with discretion, and where appropriate, as they may not be effective across all disciplines, levels of learners and topics.

Survey respondents found that the collaborative and problem solving strategies listed below were useful in improving student learning if they were used appropriately.

- Working in pairs and groups encourages learners to appreciate partnerships.
- Diverse problem solving approaches may become evident in collaborative partnerships.
- Collaborative team work engages learners in deep learning, especially when they have to answer 'why' questions.
- Constructing and solving problems provide learners with an analytical perspective.
- Problem solving strategies, like case studies, engage learners in deep learning.

ALIGNMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Respondents were of the view that the following strategies help learners to reach their learning goals.

- Assessments that are aligned with learning goals help learners to achieve goals more easily.
- Assessment tasks which are not listed in the assessment rubric are not useful in achieving learning goals.
- A diverse range of assessment tasks provides opportunities to improve learning and may be useful in motivating learners who have different strengths by offering them more opportunities to excel at their learning.

Perceptions of teaching practices at Flinders University

This section reports on survey respondents' perceptions of teaching practices and teacher characteristics that positively and negatively affect learning.

Teacher characteristics that enhance learning:

- Passionate and committed
- Respectful, compassionate and polite
- Knowledgeable about their discipline
- Positive attitude, adaptable and flexible to meet the needs of diverse learners

Teaching practices that enhance learning:

- Organised design and delivery of topics
- Relating lectures to real world events and experiences
- Focusing on critical and reflective perspectives
- Facilitation, guidance and mentoring of students
- Providing clear linkages between learning outcomes, activities and assessment to facilitate learning
- Providing opportunities to listen to the student voice
- Engaging learners in dialogue

Teacher characteristics that hinder learning:

- Uncommitted and uncaring attitudes
- Disrespectful, rude and arrogant behaviour
- Disorganised
- Inadequate in subject area knowledge
- Discouraging creativity and innovation

Teaching practices that hinder learning include:

- Disjointed presentation of learning material
- Poor communication skills of teachers, and unclear instructions
- Insensitivity to diversity among learners (for example, disability, culture and language diversity)
- Reading from lecture notes
- Limited or no direct communication with students inside and outside the classroom
- Assessments that are not connected to learning outcomes
- Not providing students with a topic outline and plan

Concluding remarks

This brochure has been produced as a dissemination document of the **Reinventing Teaching Project** to provide information at workshops and discussion meetings on teaching and learning. The December 2009 final project report can be accessed via the following link to the Committees page by selecting the Educational Matters Advisory Group Agenda and the RT Report: www.flinders.edu.au/comperv/ucs/public/ctelist.php

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