

Evaluation of Learning and Teaching Policy

Section 1 - Background Information

(1) Australian Catholic University is committed to high-quality learning and teaching, research, and community engagement. The Evaluation of Learning and Teaching Policy reflects the University's commitment to a systematic approach to evaluation and improvement of learning and teaching. It also presents a framework for evaluation to ascertain and monitor the quality of learning and teaching processes and outcomes. In turn, the Policy will provide an informed basis for making decisions to enhance and achieve continuous improvement of learning and teaching in the University.

(2) For the purposes of this Policy, evaluation constitutes a process of gathering information to develop an understanding of one or more aspects of learning and teaching in order to draw conclusions as to its merit, worth or value, and to the factors that are helping and hindering its operation. An underpinning component of the process is critical reflection, based on sound evidence. The prime beneficiaries of such evaluation are academic staff and students, in terms of the enhancement of learning and teaching that they are able to promote and experience in the light of the evaluation findings. The evaluation process is in turn of benefit to Schools, Faculties and the University, as well as to other significant stakeholders, in terms of the information it provides and the decision-making that it helps to inform.

(3) Evaluation is an integral element of the University's planning and development procedures, contributing to evidence-based decision-making on a continuing basis. As part of this, there are points at which the process is focused into formal evaluation exercises with distinct and discrete intended outcomes, such as:

- a. course reviews;
- b. unit evaluation; and
- c. teaching evaluation.

Section 2 - Contextual Issues

(4) Learning and teaching comprise an educational partnership that exists within the particular context of Australian Catholic University. In evaluating learning and teaching, the unique aspects of this context need to be recognised and taken into account. These include, for example:

- a. the University's Mission-driven philosophy of teaching as student-centred, valuing the individuality, uniqueness and dignity of all staff and students;
- b. the recognition that evaluation is a value-driven, ethical process that must respect the rights of the individuals involved;
- c. the acceptance that evaluation is both formative and summative in nature, aimed at improving, as well as providing evidence of, the quality of learning and teaching;
- d. the nature and extent of interactions between the lecturer and particular student cohorts and individual students;

- e. the nature and extent of students' contributions to and participation in the educational partnership with their lecturer and fellow students;
- f. situations in which teaching is a joint and collaborative effort, with both the individual and the team contributing to its quality;
- g. the potential impact of resources and settings on the quality of learning and teaching;
- h. particular characteristics and expectations of the discipline in which the learning and teaching are occurring;
- i. academic backgrounds of students;
- j. the number of students in the units;
- k. the nature of the units (core or elective);
- l. the level of the units (undergraduate or postgraduate); and
- m. modes of delivery.

(5) The quality of learning and teaching can only be understood and evaluated in their particular contexts. These contexts generate both enabling and constraining factors, and an understanding of such factors and their impacts is needed in reaching evaluative conclusions.

Section 3 - Evaluation Purposes and Criteria

(6) The evaluation of learning and teaching may be undertaken for a range of purposes, such as to:

- a. enhance understanding of learning and teaching processes and outcomes across the University;
- b. provide information that will assist individuals, organisational units and the University in making decisions about how to improve or develop learning and teaching;
- c. assist in determining the effectiveness of units and courses and in informing course evaluation and review;
- d. encourage and support reflective practice amongst academic staff;
- e. support processes which require evidence of learning and teaching quality such as probation and progression requirements for academic staff, promotion applications, teaching award applications and related purposes;
- f. provide evidence for quality audit processes;
- g. meet expectations of external bodies such as accreditation and funding agencies; and
- h. more generally, support the identification of aspects that could be investigated further through scholarship and research.

Section 4 - Underlying Principles

(7) The following principles underpin this Policy:

- a. evaluation data collection should be conducted in a systematic manner;
- b. multiple data collection techniques and sources should be used in order to access a range of perspectives and to maximise the validity of the process;
- c. a focus should be placed on convergence of evidence in drawing conclusions, while ensuring openness and transparency;
- d. data collection procedures for each of the techniques and sources should be standardised across the University;
- e. the evaluation approaches adopted should enable identification of learning and teaching development that occurs over time;
- f. the use of evaluation data aggregated from a range of surveys for external reporting should not enable identification of any individual academic staff member or student; student anonymity will be maintained in the

- reporting of standard surveys in ACU;
- g. the results of standard surveys are available as part of the University's quality assurance processes and to inform other processes, such as probation, progression, performance review and career planning;
 - h. Consistent with ACU's privacy policies, the University will only use or disclose the evaluation data for the purposes for which it was collected and in accordance with the [Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching Survey Procedure](#);
 - i. a staff member may choose to make the standard survey data available to others in an identifiable form, including for grant or award applications;
 - j. the collection and use of evaluation data should be designed and implemented in ways that will foster learning and teaching as an educational partnership; and
 - k. to enhance learning and teaching at individual, School, Faculty and University-wide levels, unit evaluation surveys should be undertaken in each study period in which a unit is offered; evaluation data will then be available to assess the appropriateness of existing learning and teaching contexts and to inform change where necessary.

Section 5 - Approaches to Learning and Teaching Evaluation

(8) The approaches adopted for evaluation of learning and teaching, and the particular requirements attaching to each approach, may vary according to the purpose(s) for which the evaluation is being undertaken. As noted in the underlying principles, however, multiple data collection techniques and sources need to be used for a range of specific purposes. Any comparison of data from multiple sources should be accompanied by:

- a. appropriate analysis and critical reflection on the outcomes of such feedback;
- b. development/design of strategies and actions to address the results of such feedback, in order to achieve improvement of unit design and delivery and student learning outcomes; and
- c. provision of feedback to students about the results of such surveys and other feedback mechanisms to explain the ways in which their feedback will shape future design and/or delivery of the unit.

(9) The following are examples of ways of collecting data for the evaluation of learning and teaching in the University:

- a. the learning and teaching portfolio produced by an academic staff member and/or an academic unit (noting that a portfolio is required for probation and promotion purposes);
- b. student ratings and comments, in particular through the standard instrument;
- c. reports from supervisors;
- d. peer review of learning and teaching; and
- e. team deliberations involving, for example, a staff member, peers and students.

(10) As a general requirement, student ratings and comments should be gathered every time a unit is taught.

Section 6 - Instrument to Facilitate Evaluation of Learning and Teaching

(11) The University will utilise appropriate survey and/or other instruments to assist in the evaluation of learning and teaching. The instruments include the Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching (SELT) and the Professional Experience (ProfEx) surveys for student feedback on, and evaluation of:

- a. coursework units, with or without work integrated learning components; and
- b. the teaching of individual staff members, whether as National Unit Leader or as a contributing lecturer or tutor in units with significant teaching components.

(12) Such instruments will be developed and managed by the Centre for Education and Innovation. Response rates should be taken into account when analysing the survey data, with care being taken to avoid drawing conclusions based on very small returns.

Section 7 - Ethical Issues

(13) In undertaking evaluation of learning and teaching, due regard needs to be given to the rights, privacy, dignity and entitlements of those who are participating in or who are likely to be affected by the evaluation. This relates to all elements of the evaluation, including its design, operation and reporting and subsequent use of the evaluation data and findings.

Section 8 - Roles and Responsibilities

(14) Evaluation provides a fundamental component of the learning and teaching partnership. Consequently there are distinct roles and responsibilities for each of the participants in the partnership, including Staff, Students, Schools and Faculties.

(15) Teaching staff and other staff involved in the delivery of units play a leading role in helping to establish with their Students an environment for learning and teaching that encourages and incorporates reflective evaluation, on a continuing basis, that is seen to carry benefit for their Students, themselves, the University and the wider community.

(16) Students play an important role, not only as providers of critical evaluation data but also as co-contributors to the conceptualisation and implementation of optimal learning settings in the light of those data. Students have the responsibility to provide feedback in a professional and appropriate manner.

(17) Schools and Faculties play a supporting and enabling role, seeking to promote the use of evaluation data and findings in ways that serve the interests of staff, students and the University.

(18) The Centre for Education and Innovation facilitates the conduct of SELT and ProfEx surveys and the dissemination of the results thereof in accordance with this Policy.

(19) All of the partners carry responsibility for providing honest and timely feedback to those who have participated in or who are likely to be affected by the evaluation.

(20) These various roles and responsibilities imply an openness of process in which the intentions and procedures are clearly identified in advance and faithfully adhered to in practice.

Section 9 - Revisions Made to This Policy

(21) Unless otherwise indicated, this Policy will still apply beyond the review date.

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