Peer Review of Unit of Study Outline

This document outlines some basic preparatory guidelines that will help you get the most out of undertaking the peer review of a Unit of Study Outline. An example of a Peer Review Pro Forma is also included to help you focus your colleague’s feedback.

The Unit of Study Outline is one of the most complex documents to review and also one of the most important. It is a complex document to review because there are so many elements to consider, including clarity of aims/outcomes and unit descriptions, appropriateness of timetables, relevance of readings, expected student workload, alignment of assessment tasks, notification of University policies, etc. Yet the Unit of Study Outline is a vital document that can communicate essential information to students and connect them with essential course material.

When asking a colleague to review your Unit of Study Outline, you should:

- state that it is an important task that will take several hours and that you have approached your colleague as a trusted peer whose ideas about teaching and learning you respect
- provide your colleague with a copy of the Unit of Study Outline and any other relevant material – e.g. a course reader (if available) and/or a short summary of the context of the course (year level, enrolment expectations, pre-requisites, responses to previous feedback and so on)
- provide a Pro Forma that clearly identifies the criteria against which you would like your Outline to be considered

There are several ways to establish criteria against which your Unit of Study Outline will be assessed. You may use one or a combination of the following: the criteria for excellent teaching as established by the ALTC and discussed in the Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education handbook (Harris et al., 2008); the University of Sydney's Principles Informing Learning and Teaching; your school's/department's guidelines on teaching; your own personal teaching philosophy/beliefs; guidelines established by award or promotion committees.

An example of a Pro Forma for the Peer Review of a Unit of Study Outline is provided on the following pages. You should feel free to use or adapt this Pro Forma, develop your own, or use a Pro Forma from another source. Sources consulted in developing the following example include Nancy Van Note Chism’s Peer Review of Teaching: A Sourcebook and the above-mentioned Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education handbook.
Example of a Pro Forma for the Peer Review of a Unit of Study Outline

**Peer Review of a Unit of Study**

Name of Course: _____________________

Date of Peer Review: ____________________

**To the Reviewer** – thank you for agreeing to participate in the Peer Review of a Unit of Study Outline. It is assumed that this process is confidential and that the feedback you provide will be honest, collegial and constructive. Please read the criteria below carefully and provide observations about how the Unit of Study Outline currently stands against the criteria. You may also provide suggestions about how the Unit of Study Outline might be further improved. Feel free to contact your colleague for further contextual information or elaboration on any of the listed criteria.

### Essential Information

- Is it clear how/why students can contact key people in the course?
- Is it clear when/where lectures/tutorials/seminars are held?
- Is it clear what is required from the student to fully participate in the course?
- Is material presented in an easily understandable style (tone, phrasing, formatting)?
- Does the information comply with and/or provide information on University policies and/or services (e.g. plagiarism, late penalties, counseling/disability services)?

**Comment:**

### Aims and Outcomes

- Is it clear how aims will be achieved?
- Are aims realistically achievable?
- Do aims reference student inclusivity and a respect for diversity (e.g. utilizing both individual and collaborative activities)?
- Do aims align with University graduate attributes?
- Will outcomes fulfill curriculum goals (e.g. building on the outcomes of previous units of study or preparing the student for subsequent units of study)?
- Are the proposed teaching methods clearly aligned with the unit of study aims?

**Comment:**

### Scholarly Values

- Does the Outline communicate a respect for diversity and a commitment to fostering student equity (enabling equal participation)?
- Is the Outline likely to engage students and inspire them to participate in the unit?
- Does the Outline mention previous feedback on teaching practice and/or design and any responses to such feedback?
- Are creative, unique and individual students encouraged to participate?

**Comment:**
## Assessment Information
- Are Assessment tasks explained clearly – weighting, expectations, due dates, etc.?
- Is it clear why students undertake particular assessment tasks?
- Are grading policies communicated to students and do they represent a commitment to fairness and equality?
- Is it clear whether feedback will be given to students and/or when and why feedback will be provided?
- Do assessment tasks enhance critical and creative thinking and help in the achievement of unit outcomes?

### Comment:

## Student Workload
- Is there a reasonable amount of material for the allotted time?
- Are due dates for assessment tasks evenly distributed?
- Does the Outline clearly communicate the expected workload of students?
- Is there any advice on how to deal with workload stress/pressure and who to contact if the student is struggling to meet deadlines, etc.?

### Comment:

## Readings and Resources
- Are the required readings communicated in such a way as to foster creative thinking and the deep engagement of students?
- Do the readings and resources represent diverse views and current debates?
- Do the readings model skills expected from the students?
- Are additional, recommended and further readings/resources accessible?
- Do readings relate to assessment tasks and help in the achievement of course goals?

### Comment:

## Overall Comments

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Prepared by Ben Miller for the Faculty of Arts Teaching and Learning Committee,
The University of Sydney, March 2010

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