

CERG Seminar

Peer Review of Teaching

John Hurst

Computer Science and Software Engineering
Monash University

20050401:1100

Outline

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A. J. Hurst

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- The three R's of Academia
- Academics are
 - 1 Reactionary
 - 2 Reluctant
 - 3 Recalcitrant
- Reactionary: One who favours or inclines to a political tendency or movement in the direction of extreme conservatism, esp. in opposition to radical or socialist policies.
- Reluctant: unwilling, disinclined
- Recalcitrant: resisting authority or control; not obedient or compliant, refractory

Lessons from an ex-AD(T)

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- What do we value about the university (system)?
- Change comes from a variety of directions, but ...
- ... it is change that is owned by academics that gets implemented!
- Peer group pressure?
- **Educate** - from L., e(x)-ducere *to lead or draw out of* + -ate, *one who ...*
- Leadership is a key element, but followers must be willing!

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- **Collegiate Hypothesis**: Universities change when the university community becomes convinced of the need for change.

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- **Collegiate Hypothesis**: Universities (and their communities) change when the university community (the university) becomes convinced of the need for change.

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- Quality is difficult to define

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- *Quality is FITNESS for purpose!*

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- Quality is difficult to define
- *Quality is FITNESS for purpose!*
- I don't know what quality is, but I know it when I see it!

the Quality ADRI Cycle

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Central to the AUQA process is the ADRI cycle:

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- Approach
- Deployment
- Results
- Improvement

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Or in Monash terms:

the Quality ADRI Cycle

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- Plan
- Act
- Evaluate
- Improve

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(Still Learning, p4)

Quality means Scholarship

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- The ADRI cycle implies a formalism to teaching
- An intentional, rather than existential process
- The driving force must be scholarship

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- The ADRI cycle implies a formalism to teaching
- An intentional, rather than existential process
- The driving force must be **scholarship**

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What is Scholarship?

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Surely, scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one's investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one's knowledge effectively to students. (*Scholarship Reconsidered, Ernest Boyer, 1990 p16*)

Boyer's Four Types of Scholarship

1. The scholarship of discovery

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This is the traditional definition of research: the discovery of new information together with the advancement of present understanding.

Boyer's Four Types of Scholarship

2. The scholarship of integration

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The synthesis or connection of information, knowledge and ideas across discipline boundaries and knowledge domains. The university, more than any other place, provides an environment where academics and students can work collaboratively to explore and expand such connections and interrelationships.

Boyer's Four Types of Scholarship

3. The scholarship of application

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The application of ideas, understandings and insights to fields of knowledge and practice.

This includes the application of new theory to practical situations and the impetus for research generated from everyday problems. It represents an important way in which the university is connected to the greater community.

Boyer's Four Types of Scholarship

4. The scholarship of teaching

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More than the transmission of knowledge, this represents the active and purposeful engagement of the university in the construction of new understandings.

As researchers, teachers are life-long learners. Similarly, students are inquirers, problem solvers, scholars and researchers in training.

Quality at Monash: Values and Principles: 2000

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- CVP 4: Diversity, Devolution and Comparable Treatment
- CVP 5: Open and Informed Approach
- CVP 6: Planned and Systematic Approach
- CVP 7: Self-Reflection and External Reference

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- CVP 7: Self-Reflection and External Reference

The explanation to the last point is germane: “Monash encourages external reference in many shapes and forms, including systematic collection of stakeholder’s views, benchmarking and *external input* to review processes.” Here, *external input* includes peer review.

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The Waller Report: 1992

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Research and teaching – the discovery of knowledge and the imparting of knowledge – are the prime functions of the university. These functions are, or should be, mutually supportive. The best research environment is one in which researchers are constantly challenged to communicate ideas to students; the best teaching environment is one in which students are invited to share the excitement and problems of discovery
(Monash Research Review Committee Report (the “Waller Report”) 1992, p 5).

Still Learning: 2002

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... a research-active teacher is thought more likely to be enthusiastic in her or his teaching and this enthusiasm in itself comes through to assist student learning. In some general way, there is also a belief that good researchers are also good teachers. For the most part the evidence offered is by way of anecdote and the empirical evidence to support the teaching-research nexus is weak.

Still Learning: The Report of Our Self Review pp 24-25

Still Learning: 2002

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Despite the commitment to staff being teachers and researchers/scholars, modern pressures on time and competing work demands are clearly leading to a resurgence of old debates about whether we should move, or be permitted to move, to greater specialisation between teachers and researchers; in effect that the teaching-research nexus should be loosened or even abandoned. Our sense is that most proponents of a split between teaching-only and researchonly staff have come reluctantly to that position as a way of preserving quality in a period of declining public funding, but it is a view with which Monash should contend.

Still Learning: The Report of Our Self Review pp 24-25

Teaching-Research Nexus: A Discussion Paper

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- Bringing the teacher's research findings into the classroom
- Research, curriculum development and internationalisation
- Building students' research and inquiry capabilities
- Utilising and building a community of scholars
- Exploring the context of research
- Teaching Research Methods
- Researchers in training
- Researching teaching
- Teaching leading to research

Graham Webb, 2003

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Teaching Reviews versus Unit Reviews

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- Teaching Review: review of the teacher, styles used, pedagogical approaches, expertise, responsiveness, preparedness, etc..
- Subject Review: review of the subject start and end points, prerequisites, assumed knowledge, learning objectives, outcomes, assessment strategies and alignment, unit context and relevance to course and university outcomes.

The Four Pronged Review Trident

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- Self review
- Student review
- Peer review
- Professional review

It is worth noting that the avatar was designed to address the first 3 of these!

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- Review by peers

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- Review by peers
- “Peers” means colleagues, with some level of discipline and pedagogic knowledge

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- Review by peers
- “Peers” means colleagues, with some level of discipline and pedagogic knowledge
- How much discipline knowledge?

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- “Peers” means colleagues, with some level of discipline and pedagogic knowledge
- How much discipline knowledge?
You be the judge ...

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- How much discipline knowledge?
You be the judge ...
- How much pedagogic knowledge?

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- “Peers” means colleagues, with some level of discipline and pedagogic knowledge
- How much discipline knowledge?
You be the judge ...
- How much pedagogic knowledge?
You be the judge ...

Peer Review: Motivation

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- Grad Cert Higher Ed
- lecture audits: both passive and active
- team teaching
- new faculty model, cross campus commonality
- the concept of “equivalence” in teaching

Peer Review: Approaches

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- Sit in on lectures/tutorials/labs/tutor sessions
- Set/Attempt assignments
- Moderate/Mark exams
- Review objectives, teaching strategies, workloads, etc. (avatar)
- the “Reader over Your Shoulder”
- important to remember the last two steps of the Quality cycle ...

Peer Review: Threats

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- Criticism can be threatening!
- Who has not disagreed with a paper rejection? Why?
- What can we do to reduce this threat?
- Costs
 - time
 - ?

Peer Review: External Drivers

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Evaluation

Peer Review

What the
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A Suggestion

Summary

- Nelson reforms
- AUQA
- The University

Peer Review: Promotion

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Seminar

A. J. Hurst

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- Promotion is based on evidence
- What is good teaching evidence? ...
- ... Peer Review reports
- The initiative itself is a positive ...
- ... The improvement in outcomes is a double positive!

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- “The peer-review process is a very important way of improving teaching quality.”
- promotion: “PR is a good way of providing evidence on one’s commitment to quality teaching.”
- “(Increasing) multicampus, international collaboration in the design, development, and delivery of educational resources, (means that) peer-review evaluations become more important to us.

What the Dean Says (cont)

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- “Our current efforts to design the core units do not stop once we’ve got a first design. It is a continuous process, and the units will change as we go through the quality cycle.”
- “Each of us must spend less time on developing teaching resources unique to our own units, delivery style, etc. and work more with collaboratively developed resources. This way we free up time for research and hopefully also work with higher-quality teaching materials (because they have been developed collaboratively). In such an environment, peer-review is an important component of the quality cycle.”

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- Create Peer Review groups of 3-4 people
- roster Peer Review activities
- discuss as group
- improve on next delivery
- (Notice the quality cycle at work ...)

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- Peer Review can be Good for your students
- Peer Review can be Good for the university
- Peer Review can be Good for your Peers!

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