



Aiming for systemic change through an embedded continuing professional development initiative

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We will show how we have tried to drive systemic change in the teaching culture of a Faculty through the provision of online continuing professional development resources firmly embedded in the University's reward and recognition processes. Technology will be presented as an enabler in the context of a transformation strategy that engaged academic staff, academic managers and members of the Staffing Committee in the change process. We will detail the launch plan for this initiative and present data on visits to the online continuing professional development modules since the launch. Finally, measurements for the success of this project will be discussed.

Keywords: teaching, culture, continuing, professional, development.

Introduction

In early 2009 the Associate Dean Education at the Faculty Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS) University of Auckland initiated a strategically important project to achieve systemic change in the teaching culture of the Faculty through the provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resources firmly located within the University's reward and recognition processes. The Director of the Faculty's Learning Technology Unit (<http://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/faculty/ltu/>) led the project and the project team included members from the Faculty's Centre for Medical and Health Sciences Education (CMHSE) (<http://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/cmhse>) along with a contracted learning designer. Transformation efforts require a strong guiding coalition (Kotter, 1995) and with this in mind we sought support from significant stakeholders within the faculty as we progressed with this project.

The project deliverables were specified as: a transparent teaching performance rubric to guide staff in developing their teaching in line with University performance expectations; a set of online CPD modules (<http://www.fmhshub.auckland.ac.nz>) and an ePortfolio to allow academics to maintain records of their teaching performance for formative (self development) and summative (formal reviews) purposes. The full range of CPD resources is available online and technology was, therefore, a fundamental enabler in this project.

This initiative sought to be transformative by: explicitly promoting ongoing CPD in the context of the University's reward and recognition processes; providing staff with a transparent teaching performance rubric; providing online modules to allow staff to engage in CPD at a time and place of their own choosing; offering online content specific to the needs of medical and health science professionals; and by providing staff with the means to record and evidence their teaching developments in an ePortfolio. Measurements for the success of this transformation effort will be presented at the end of the paper.

Performance rubric

The development of the teaching performance rubric is core to this change initiative and we will, therefore, explain the rubric in some detail. The University's policy document detailing teaching performance expectations is difficult to interpret in practice. Therefore, we created a teaching performance rubric that presents the performance standards and judgement criteria for the various academic grades of lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and professor. The rubric was made available online so that it would be immediately available for staff engaged in CPD. Readers can view the full rubric at <https://www.fmhshub.auckland.ac.nz/23.html> where they will see the 7 teaching performance areas along with the sorts of activities that might be used to evidence performance.

An example from the teaching rubric will help to make clear how the performance rubric works in practice. In Table 1 below we can see one kind of teaching activity, 'Delivery of teaching to facilitate learning'. Examples of the different sorts of achievements that might be evidenced are listed under the four performance levels. We can see, for example, that a satisfactory performance might be achieved through making use of a range of teaching and learning methodologies. Teachers might achieve merit through evidencing innovation in teaching and through evaluating the impact of the innovation on student learning. Excellence might be evidenced through promoting effective teaching practice at institutional level.

Table 1: Teaching activity areas and associate performance criteria

	Satisfactory	Merit	Excellence	Distinction
Delivery of teaching to facilitate learning	Competent use of a range of teaching and learning methodologies to engage students in the learning process	Innovation in teaching methodologies and evaluation of impact on learning. Applies appropriate pedagogical frameworks to the improvement of own teaching practice	Promotes effective teaching practice at institutional level through mentoring, peer review, workshops or seminars. Researches into approaches to teaching that improve learning outcomes.	National / international standing in furthering understanding of and improving of teaching and learning.

With the need for a strong guiding coalition in mind, the rubric was developed in consultation with the Associate Dean Education, the Staffing Committee and academic managers. The Dean of the Faculty signed off the rubric. Feedback from teaching staff both during the creation of the rubric and since the official launch of the rubric suggests that staff find the transparent performance areas and indicators extremely useful, particularly as the online modules have been designed with specific reference to teaching performance expectations. We will look at this in the next section. The rubric should also be useful for academic managers responsible for carrying out annual performance reviews of academic staff and for the Staffing Committee as they make recommendations about promotion applications. The means for evaluating the utility of the rubric will be discussed at the end of this paper.

Online CPD modules

We created the CPD modules in consultation with academic staff in order to ensure that we met their CPD needs. Based on feedback suggesting academics were time poor, that they did not want to work through a CPD course and that they needed just in time learning, we designed research-based online multimedia CPD modules to cover each of the major teaching performance areas found in the performance rubric. Based on a comment from an academic staff member and a suggestion in the literature that professionals tend to learn through their practice (Knight, 2006), we structured the content within each module in terms of a series of questions that educators might ask in their teaching. The rationale for this decision was that teachers do in fact learn about teaching through asking questions in their teaching practice (Knight, 2006). Readers can view module / question structure along with module content by visiting the CPD resources <http://www.fmhshub.auckland.ac.nz>.

Each module was designed to engage staff in authentic CPD activities through connecting their learning with their teaching development needs. Staff work through the content of a module in terms of a particular challenge faced in a teaching performance area and the learning design requires staff to reflect on their teaching practice as they engage in their learning. Staff are also encouraged to work through the module with a view to creating an ePortfolio record to evidence their development. This strategy entails that staff will be recording their teaching developments both for their own professional learning and for their career progression. The authentic nature of the learning is important both in terms of what we know about effective CPD (Samarawickrema, Benson, & Brack, 2010) and in terms of motivating busy staff to engage in CPD.

Technology is again an important CPD enabler through providing online learning opportunities for busy teaching staff who need flexible CPD opportunities (Ostashewski, 2010). From a strategic perspective we have provided staff with a very clear connection between their CPD activities and the University's expectations for teaching performance. We have also helped to create the conditions for a culture of ongoing CPD through providing resources to meet the needs of busy academics. Finally, the design of the modules means that staff will engage in research based improvements to their teaching. We have, therefore, taken a step towards promoting teaching as an activity worthy of scholarship (Schroeder, 2007).

ePortfolio

A portfolio is a collection of information about teaching practice maintained for formative and summative purposes. (Seldin & Miller, 2009; Tucker, Stronge, Gareis, & Beers, 2003). The FMHS ePortfolio – called myEportfolio – is a purpose built system designed to allow staff to quickly and easily create and maintain teaching records. Staff can use pre-defined form fields to record the teaching challenge that they are addressing, what they did to develop their teaching, what happened as a result of the change and any follow-on actions resulting from their evaluate of their intervention. Staff can also upload associated evidence such as student evaluations of their courses.

The ePortfolio was presented to the Staffing Committee on two occasions during the development process. We were hoping that the Staffing Committee would endorse use of the ePortfolio for evidencing teaching performance. This did not happen. We will, however, be presenting to the Staffing Committee again now that the system is live in order to explain the merits and potential benefits of the system for all stakeholders. We will also be evaluating the use of the ePortfolio at key times in the academic year including the annual performance review and the promotion round.

Analytics

The modules and the ePortfolio were launched in April 2010 using the Faculty's all staff mailing list. The modules were also announced in the Deans' weekly diary and presented at two Faculty fora held week commencing 11th May. We are using Google Analytics: <http://www.google.com/analytics>, to monitor traffic to the CPD resources. Table 2 below presents selected data covering four important periods: the launch until present; the 7 day period following the launch; the 7 day period following promotion in the Dean's weekly electronic diary; the 7 day period commencing with first Faculty presentation and including the second Faculty presentation.

Table 2: Visits, views and time on site

	Total Visits	Unique Visits	% Unique	Page Views	Average Time On Site (Minutes)	Bounce Rate	% Bounce
22 nd March – 18 th June (Launch – Present)	438	199	45.43	1850	3.05	219	50%
22 nd March – 28 th March (Launch – 1 Week)	39	34	87.17	146	3.38	16	41.03
9 th April – 15 th April (Dean's Diary – 1 Week)	42	34	80.95	180	2.15	15	35.71
11 th May – 17 th May (Faculty Fora – 1 Week)	34	18	52.94	137	3.41	20	58.82

If we look at the period from the launch to the time of writing, we can see that there have been 438 visits with only 199 of those being unique visits. The average time on site is very low at 3.05 minutes. The bounce rate – the percentage of initial visitors that "bounced" away to a different site, rather than continuing on to other pages within the site – is 50% of total visitors for this period. Overall, visitors to the site since the launch date until the time of writing seem to have been going to have a look at the modules. The majority of visitors did not stay on the site and there was very little in the way of engagement with site content. We see the same pattern of limited time on site and low levels of engagement for the other periods covered in Table 2. This picture is further confirmed by the page view figures shown in Table 3. The combination of the bounce rate – 1 page view – and the percentage of visitors only viewing two pages is greater than 50% of total visitors for all the periods that we are considering. The number of visitors viewing 3 or 4 pages is very low for all the periods that we are considering.

Table 3: Page views

	2 Page Views	% total visitors	3 Page Views	% total visitors	4 Page Views	% total visitors
22 nd March – 18 th June (Launch – Present)	53	12.10	43	8.92	24	5.48
22 nd March – 28 th March (Launch – 1 Week)	10	25.64	2	5.13	2	5.13
9 th April – 15 th April (Dean's Diary – 1 Week)	7	16.67	8	19.05	2	4.76
11 th May – 17 th May (Fora – 1 Week)	2	5.88	2	5.88	3	8.82

Given that the University of Auckland is a research-intensive university, the low initial usage rate for the CPD modules was entirely expected. Promotion of the resources will be ongoing and with this in mind we have identified two important periods for raising the profile of the modules and the ePortfolio within Faculty. The first is the period leading up to the Annual Performance Review – an annual review of academic performance including teaching performance – that is carried out annually in December. During this time we will contact academic managers and suggest that they promote the modules and the ePortfolio to staff during the annual review process. The second key period will be the promotion round which begins in May of each year. This means that we will need to promote the site and the ePortfolio in August / September of the current year to give academics time to use the modules and to create ePortfolio records for their promotion applications.

Evaluation

We will be evaluating the use of and the perceived value of the CPD modules, the rubric and the ePortfolio. The question types that we have in mind will provide us with a measure of the extent of systemic change along with a measure of impact on student learning. For example, we will ask academics about the extent of independent research into teaching practice, the nature of changes made to teaching as a consequence of engaging with the modules and the results of evaluations of changes made. We will also ask about use of and perceived value of the ePortfolio. For example, we will ask the Staffing Committee whether ePortfolio submissions were useful in making recommendations about promotion applications. Finally we will ask the three groups about use of and perceived value of the rubric. For example, we will ask the Staffing Committee whether they found the framework useful when making recommendations about promotion applications.

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