

CUC100 Review Meeting Notes: student and staff reflections for 2012

Teaching team: Trent Newman; Elizabeth Thynne, Nicola Rolls, Stephanie Zhang, Caroline Rannersberger, Scott Knight, Clare Mc Viety, Vibeke Foss, Mia Christiansen, Fran Tolhurst

Review team: Trent Newman, Elizabeth Thynne, Nicola Rolls, Fran Tolhurst, Sharon Bridgeman/Lan Yang, Danial Kelly, Mal Flack, Bev Turnbull, Marian Dyason, Maria Huddleston, Greg Shaw, Jaimee Hamilton, Larissa Pickalla, Micah Thorbjornsen; Barbara Coat

Present: Trent Newman, Elizabeth Thynne, Nicola Rolls, Bev Turnbull, Marian Dyason, Maria Huddleston, Lan Yang

Area of evaluation

Overall usefulness of the unit***

Students comments (SELT)*

A number of students commented on how helpful the unit was for the rest of their study, e.g in terms of unit strengths they commented:

- It is a great help in coming to Uni for the first time and needing something to help a person ease in to the change of lifestyle some may find.
- Very enlightening and should be a pre-requisite to all units needing essay writing as a base skill.
- This unit has its strength in the development of communication skills, teamwork skills, creative skills, computer competence and referencing.
- How much this unit has built the confidence of students in presenting individual self- opinion.
- Also I feel that the skills gained in this unit will help in other areas of my studies
- The fact that this unit lays the foundation for the remainder of my studies.
- This unit has helped to prepare me for academic success by teaching me academic writing and I have found it a valuable unit.

One interesting comment about the strength of the unit was: "That it is compulsory. I have gained credit into second year, without this unit i know i would really struggle with future units."

One student wondered if the classes could be streamed for more and less confident students.

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| <p>Teaching & Review Team reflections**</p> | <p>Diversity in first year classrooms is a challenge across the university. Highly confident students who do not qualify for CUC100 exemption are in the minority and these students are encouraged to study externally with the option of dropping in where necessary. This allows them to move at their own pace.</p> <p>Maria raised an issue where VET feeder students are being automatically given credit transfer. Further discussion revealed a lack of clarity about the exemption rules for common units. These have been copied below from http://www.cdu.edu.au/governance/rules/coursesleadingtothedegreeofbachelor.pdf</p> <p>(4) Subject to specific Course Rules, all students will successfully complete two common units as part of their Bachelor Degree and normally as part of the first year of their degree.</p> <p>Where a student:</p> <p>(a) enrolling in an undergraduate degree program has been granted Recognition of Prior Learning or Credit Transfer of 80 credit points or more, the student need not necessarily complete common units;</p> <p>(b) has been granted less than 80 credit points in Recognition of Prior Learning, common units will normally be completed unless to do so would prevent the student meeting other course rules;</p> <p>(c) enrolls in an undergraduate degree program through an articulated VET program, common units need not be taken where it can be established that the student completed similar work in the VET program.</p> |
| <p>Actions short term</p> | <p>In 2013 we will allocate one tutorial session for “students who need additional language support” and encourage students to self-identify for this session.</p> <p>Referral to ALLSP will continue to be actively promoted for students with English language issues.</p> <p>Nicola to follow up Maria Huddleston’s credit transfer queries with George Karpetis in the early new year.</p> |
| <p>Actions long term</p> | |
| <p>Unit design/organisation</p> | |

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| Students comments (SELT)* | <p>A well-organised unit that will be useful for future studies.</p> <p>Several requests for earlier timing for the unit, prior to commencing other units.</p> |
| Teaching & Review Team reflections** | <p>Review team members agreed that it would be much more useful if students could bed down at least some of the skills taught in CUC100, for example: managing your study, knowing what and how to read.</p> <p>The proposal for the new theme “sustainability” was introduced (Attachment E) and the review team agreed this would be an exciting and relevant topic for their students. Marian commented that she could see particular relevance for her students. Ideas and input from the team into proposed essay topics will be welcomed and the team will be updated as the preparation for the theme progresses in 2013.</p> |
| Actions short term | <p>The new online orientation site (Nicola on working party) will prompt students to consider some of these initial skills before they get going.</p> |
| Actions long term | <p>Discussion at a university policy level about establishing a rule that all students complete CUC100 in their first semester.</p> |
| Assessment | |
| Students comments (SELT)* | <p>Slow turnaround time for marking of assignments was raised in the internal SELTS.</p> |
| Teaching & Review Team reflections** | <p>In semester 2 there some delays of up to 3 weeks with marking turnaround caused by staff absences and unexpected pressures. However for 2013 efforts to keep within the 2 week timeframe would be renewed.</p> <p>Review team members pointed out that for other units, turnaround can be between 2-4 weeks so students’ expectations need to be managed.</p> |

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| | <p>“Standards” for marking were raised by the review team who raised a perception that CUC100 marks more easily than other units giving students an inflated sense of their ability and expectation of marks in their other units.</p> <p>Marian raised a specific example where she had viewed a students’ CUC100 essay and was concerned that the thoroughness of feedback was lacking and the mark achieved by the student’s higher than the quality of work warranted. The coordination team followed this particular case up and agreed that there were problems with the staff members marking – a reminder that as well as moderation regular checking in with staff to encourage thorough and consistent feedback is important. In the case of this staff member an excessive marking load may also have exacerbated the problem.</p> <p>Re Standards the Assignments are consistently moderated in CUC100, but on occasion especially where a staff member has a heavy marking load (some have 100+ to mark for e.g) their response may be less thorough which could raise problems such as the one mentioned by Marian. The CUC100 team reminded the group that being a necessarily heavily scaffolded and skills based unit students are likely to achieve higher marks relative to more challenging content based units in their courses. However students have this pointed out to them when they receive feedback for their final essay.</p> |
| <p>Actions short term</p> | <p>We will renew attempts to stick to the 2 week maximum and reiterate with students that this is the timeframe they can expect.</p> <p>The CUC100 team will view the example cited by Marian to establish whether it is an anomaly or an indicator of a wider issue.</p> |
| <p>Actions long term</p> | <p>In our next review team meeting in early 2013 we will conduct a sample moderation exercise with reviewers as a vehicle for discussion and coming to a common understanding of standards applied to assessment in common units.</p> <p>The common units committee has also established a working party of T&L leaders to examine standards and establish clear guidelines for 2013.</p> |

| Learning materials | |
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| Students comments (SELT)* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of students commended the textbook. • Collaborate sessions were greatly appreciated although uptake was modest. • Maps for the key points in readings were also appreciated. |
| Teaching & Review Team reflections** | <p>CUC100 staff felt very positive about the collaborate sessions and will continue with these.</p> <p>The review team raised the ongoing problems with students referencing skills.</p> <p>It was agreed that students' exposure to referencing skills in 1 unit (CUC100) will not guarantee their mastery and that it is an ongoing process of development that should be promoted throughout their degree.</p> <p>The team also recognised that in some cases there is too much, unrealistic fixation on perfect referencing in the first year at the expense of an appreciation of students ideas and expression.</p> <p>Another issue is the wide variety of styles utilised which is very confusing for students (and staff).</p> <p>Anne informed the group about the referencing working party (on which Nicola and Anne are reps) established by the library which aims to explore these issues and recommend a sensible approach to academic board.</p> |
| Actions short term | Anne has provided an excellent paper exploring these issues (see attached) |
| Actions long term | Nicola and Anne to follow up these issues with the working party and academic board. It was also suggestions that these referencing issues should be discussed with faculty L&T committees with the view that all lecturers should be encouraged to adopt best practice for scaffolding referencing skills (and other academic literacies) in first year. |

Teaching

An overwhelming number of comments under “Strengths of this unit” referred to very helpful, supportive, approachable, enthusiastic teaching staff as being a key strength.

An unsolicited example from an external student to the CUC100 coordinator and her CUC100 tutor, also illustrates how much many external students have to juggle.

“Hi Elizabeth,

Caroline and yourself have been two angels to me . I feel really blessed to have had your support. I have completed the survey already. I commend the external CUC100 team.

I've had a couple of hurdles in this subject. The IT component, tiredness and my computer and phone system that was down for four day. I never gave up. I truly believe that this unit is fantastic. I enjoyed it. I have learnt so much.

Caroline has been my tower of strength. The support and understanding I will never forget.

I'm a full time worker in Nursing (shift). I work around the clock, but even when Im dead on my feet. I always seem to have the enthusiasm for Acad. Literacies. First year / semester of University is always difficult. Many barriers to get through. The entire setup of the unit is great, easy to follow and informative. Elizabeth all I have to complete now is a couple of notes for the essay plan, change my lovely pink background colour (ha ha).

Then I will start my essay.

I'm tired, currently in the midst of night shifts. I'm passionate about my role as a nurse. Patients

Always come first for me. My academic dream is to gain my degree. I should have done it years ago really! I'm proud to say that have been under Caroline's wing .If the ' powers above ' need or would like verbal feedback for this unit, tell them to give me a call.

Thank you to you and the team. “

**Students
comments
(SELT)***

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| Teaching & Review Team reflections** | Nicola commended Liz for her great work leading external tutors and building such a strong culture of commitment and empathy for students. Nicola and Trent also enjoyed the opportunity to build a very positive learning community, made so much easier in the ELearning studios which are conducive to a more interactive experience. |
| Actions short term | None required |
| Actions long term | The CU tutor training will be conducted in February and is an opportunity to revise and promote good teaching practice. |
| LearnLine functionality | |
| Students comments (SELT)* | Several requests for greater consistency of layout in Learnline across all of the common units and the rest of the university |
| Teaching & Review Team reflections** | The team agreed this can be confusing for students. Anne reminded the team that the office of OLT will be introducing a template which will standardise learn line more effectively. |
| Actions short term | Nicola to revisit consistency across the three common units for “look and feel” and menus. |
| Actions long term | Adherence to the OLT template. |