

# CUC106 Review Meeting Notes

**August 28 & Oct 17th 2014**

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**Apologies:** Dan Baschiera (Humanitarian & Development), Darius Pfitzner (Business), Maria Huddleston (Psychology), Marianne Dyason (Art and Design), Kate Presswell (Sustainability)

## Agenda

1. Introduction and background
2. Retention & success – grades, SELTS & Survey
3. Why CUC106 is a more challenging common unit
4. Student Views about what needs changing
5. Working group suggestions for change
6. Ongoing monitoring

## Meeting Notes

### 1. Introduction and background

The purpose of this review is to address the continued high drop-out rate in the external delivery of CUC106 through a systematic review of the unit by the CUC106 course advisory group. The CUC106 reference group includes academic representatives from the courses for which CUC106 is core, coordinators from each common unit, student representation and additional content expertise (sustainability).

CUC106 is a project based, group work unit that requires students to respond to a design need in a third world setting and through this response students learn skills in researching, sustainable design and academic/professional communication.

Students can choose either CUC106 or CUC100 as their literacy-focus common unit. CUC106 focuses on writing genres for science/technology so it is recommended that students in these streams choose CUC106. However, it is compulsory for Engineering, IT and design students to do CUC106.

## 2. Retention and Success S.1 2014

The following spread of grades and SELTS scores for the unit sum up the indicative pattern for retention, success and students' evaluation scores over the last 2 years.

Spread of Grades S.1.2014						
Mode	External		Internal		TOTAL	
Grade	Students (numerical)	Student (percentage)	Students (numerical)	Student (percentage)	Students (numerical)	Student (percentage)
HD	2	1.4%	2	1.4%	4	1%
D	30	22.2%	29	20%	59	22%
C	21	15.5%	45	32%	66	24%
P	4	2.2%	21	15%	25	9%
PU	0	0	0	0	0	0%
PC	0	0	0	0	0	0%
F	0	0	5	36%	6	2%
DNS	13	9.6%	7	5%	20	7%
PO	0	0	0	0	0	0%
AC	0	0	0	0	0	0%
SPEC	0	0	0	0	0	0%
*WW/W	63	46.6%	29	21%	92	34%
WF	3	2.2%	1	0.13%	4	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Withdrawal rate are comparable to last year's semester 1 withdrawals.

**Student Evaluations (SELTS) S.1 2014 (Attachments B1 & B2)**

Questions	2014 Mean Likhert Scores for range 1-7		
	S.1	S.1	S.2
	Internal offering (Respondents 50%)	External offering (Respondents 37%)	External offering (Respondents 38%)
The teaching of this unit is well organised.	4.82	5.88	5.88
The delivery of this unit is sufficient for effective learning.	4.64	5.46	5.65
The teaching stimulates my interest in this unit.	3.82	4.88	5.50
The unit provides opportunities for participation and sharing of ideas.	5.36	5.85	6.15
It is made clear what is expected of me.	4.82	5.80	5.77
The feedback on my work is provided promptly.	4.73	5.70	5.50
Overall, the assessment of the unit is fair.	4.73	5.95	5.62
This unit is well taught.	4.55	5.68	5.73
I received sufficient information on how to use Learnline.	5.10	6.10	5.80
I have sufficient access to a computer for my learning in this unit.	5.73	6.54	6.23
The incorporation of Library resources in Learnline helps me in my learning.	4.64	5.85	5.65
I have sufficient access to assistance when using Learnline.	5.93	4.56	5.54

**Score Range:**

S.1 Internal: 4.80 – 5.40, Mean 5.93 (Standard Dev. +/- 1.29)

S.1 External: 5.23 – 6.05, Mean 5.33 (Standard Dev. +/- 1.42)

S.2 External: 5.50 - 6.23, Mean 5.54 (Standard Dev. +/- 1.21)

Semester 1 SELTs were aligned closely with Semester 1 last year. For semester 2 , while the number of respondents was lower and the mean grade close to S.1 external offering, the score for questions about delivery, sharing ideas and teaching was higher than for semester 1's external cohort. We attribute this to a specific focus on increased personal contact, checking and support for students and encouraging group participation. Qualitative commentary covered both extremes on most issues raised from the overall value of the unit, to group work, quality of learning materials and delivery.

**Positive feedback:** Generally the students seemed to enjoy the workshop format of teaching and the passion shown by the lecturers/tutors, below are some extracts from the SELTs:

**External**

- Clear instructions
- Group learning
- The chance to practice referencing
- Everything covered well in unit and in relevant order
- Applying work to real issues
- Learning to work in a group despite initially discomfort
- Good assignment examples
- Good quality and useful information
- Great teacher – encouraging and supportive

**Internal**

- Learning how to work as a group/teamwork and project planning
- Learning in the ELearning studio with use of web based resources to augment lectuere explanations
- Real-life case studies
- Lecturers care with feedback and support with assignments
- Connection between learning here and other studies
- Core ideas and themes of interest and relevance
- Passionate teachers
- Multidisciplinary students body

### 3. Why CUC106 is more challenging

Beyond a different genre focus, the other key differences between CUC106 and CUC100 which make it quite challenging for some students are:

- CUC106 requires group work for all but one assignment. (Group work is demanding because it requires students to rapidly build their skills in group communication, negotiation and conflict resolution.
- CUC106 has a content focus that is equal in depth and breadth to the literacy focus, including the requirement to:
  - Understand the cultural context
  - Apply concepts of sustainability to
  - Physically design a solution
  - Produce a model of the design.

So students are learning and demonstrating all of the above in addition to the literacy component - academic research, reading, and writing and presentation skills.

**Students most at risk:** *External students* have an additional challenge in managing all of the above in a virtual world. Our increasing high *International student* cohort is also considerably challenged by the multifaceted conceptual; and practical requirements of the unit.

### 4. Student views about what needs changing

To inform this review student views through SELT and a specific survey have been obtained and are summed up below

#### 4.1 Through SELT Commentary S1 2014 (n=78)

While overall the SELTS for CUC106 are between 5.5 and 6 out of 7 and on par with the university average, they are lower than the other CU SELTS which average 6 and above. (Attachment B 1&2)

The qualitative comments about what needs improving in the most recent SELT reflect comments in previous ones. They are summed up as follows:

#### **Common issues**

- Want less group assignments
- Forming groups hard
- Unfair because some do all the work
- Members drop out
- Finding common times to meet for project hard
- It's an engineering unit – subject matter not relevant
- So much work – too much, less assignments

#### **Occasional Issues**

- Want a more local project context
- Want more in class work
- Want more literacy focus – report writing, presentations etc

## 4.2 Feedback from survey for reasons for withdrawal (Externals)

A survey was conducted with those students who had withdrawn from CUC106 in semester 1 to ascertain their reasons for withdrawal.

When asked *what factors effected their reasons for withdrawal most*, of 8 possible choices 50% cited the requirement for teamwork as the principle factor. The requirement for design and project work and the academic demands of the course had some influence on withdrawal for 25% of the respondents. Other reasons were related to personal issue – work, reducing overall study load etc

Those who found team work the most influential reason were asked *what aspects of teamwork influenced their decision*. Their responses included:

- Contacting & communicating with group (61%)
- Group assignments (54%)
- Lack of face to face (38%)
- Allocating and sharing workloads (23%)
- Finding a group (15%)

(See Attachment C for Detail)

## 5. Some suggestions for addressing attrition

The following suggestions based on the reflections of the unit coordinator, teaching staff and the working party (CUC106 review group):

### a/ Unit management suggestions to improve students' readiness and support:

- The expectation for group work could be flagged before students choose to enrol in the unit and the option to do CUC100 flagged up front for those courses where CUC106 is not compulsory (e.g Pharmacy). This could happen through:
  - CU factsheet could be reinstated in the admission email
  - A short introductory video on announcements page to engage students in the unit (past student testimonials) but to also remind them of its requirements and their options.
- Discussions with Course coordinators to ensure the options for either literacy unit are understood.
- Focus very intensive support in the first weeks to:
  - Help them from the start to engage with the topic and reflect and think about their strengths and the role they might play in (use assignment 1 for this)
  - Help them define roles very clearly
  - Utilise a learnline tool for compulsory steps to organising group and preparing for group work, understanding how to organise their study time and ensure they allocate roles very carefully in their plan (Ass.3a).

**NB** This semester, intensive support may already have had a positive effect on retention which is 40% compared to 48% in the same semester last year. This support included:

- Quick turnaround for enquiries
- Very detailed communication and guidance
- Making regular phone calls as needed
- Giving tips.

## b. Revision of assignments to reduce excessive work load and number of group assignments

Reduce assignment workload allowing more time for skill and knowledge development

- Assignment number
- Remove model requirement – optional
- Utilise assignment 1 reflection to hook students in personally asking about their experience and helping them make connections with their field.

Reduce group work and thus stressors and time involved in collaborating on assignments

- Reduce number of group assignments
- Students given the option to work individually should there be irresolvable problems with the group. (NB Lecturer works closely with groups to help resolve issues) Students are required to reflect on the efficacy of their group work in the final report so those who lose their group members still have an opportunity to demonstrate awareness of group dynamics and functions.

The change in assessment regime based on these suggestions would manifest as indicated in the following table, with three instead of 4 teamwork (T) assignments and the need to provide a physical model as part of the presentation optional.

Current Assessment			Proposed Assessment		
Assessment	Focus	I or T	Assessment	Deliverable	I or T
<b>Compulsory Task</b>	Referencing	I	<b>Assignment 1:</b> Initial thoughts	Discussion Forum: getting to know context and design needs	I
<b>Assignment 1:</b> Research 15%	Preliminary Research	I	<b>Assignment 2:</b> Project proposal	Include preliminary research, scope project, diagram	I
<b>Assignment 2:</b> Plan and management for group project (Journal)	a. Project Plan 20%	T	<b>Assignment 3:</b> Management plan Presentation and report	Project Management plan	T
	b. Project Minutes 10%	T		Presentation (model optional)	T
<b>Assignment 3:</b> Presentation of completed group project	a. Presentation with model 20%	T		Written Report (2500 words)	
	b. Final Report 35%	T			

**c. Ongoing monitoring and measurement:**

- Tracking whether students who withdraw return to CUC106 or enrol in CUC100
- Use analytics to understand their engagement patterns more deeply
- Measure success of these interventions through retention figures and SELTS from SS, 2014