

SPECTRUM

Centre for Academic Development, Victoria University

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Centre for Academic Development News

2012 was a busy year for the Centre for Academic Development staff, across the whole spectrum of our activities. A particular highlight was the successful Ako Victoria event in June, with over 120 participants. The theme for the 2013 Ako Victoria is 'Diversity' and we have an exciting and stimulating day planned for 24 April - note it in your diary now. Registration is available on our website at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/AkoVictoria.

Other major achievements in 2012 include the validation of the new PHELT programme (to include a new diploma level); Bernadette Knewstubb's award of distinction for her PhD thesis; improvements to tutor training; significant developments in digital technologies for learning and teaching; support for Māori and Pasifika staff; and closer effective working relationships with faculties and CSUs, especially with colleagues in Student Learning Support Services. Two SLSS staff contributed to CAD work through secondment projects, leading to web resources for 'inclusive teaching' and 'critical and creative thinking'.

2013 promises to be just as productive, with our new Innovation Incubator and continuation of our Digital Strategy initiative; CAD online resources development, including a new, online module for tutors; Maori and Pasifika student and staff success work; curriculum and academic development workshops and projects; increased enrolments on PHELT; support for the new suite of handbooks from the Academic Office; and the diverse range of HE research undertaken by CAD academic and support staff.

This is my final Spectrum as Director, as I am returning to the U.K. for family reasons. I am thankful for the privilege of having worked with you all at Victoria and especially the fantastic CAD team. I am confident that they make a significant and valuable contribution to teaching, learning and research at Victoria. Dr Liz Jones is acting Director and will move across to CAD at the end of February.

Best wishes,
Barbara

Postgraduate Certificate & Diploma in Higher Education Learning and Teaching

Have you ever wondered why you thought you'd taught one thing, but your students seemed to learn something else? Would you like to know more about the way your beliefs about teaching affect what you do in the classroom? Are you interested in improving student learning in your courses? Would you like to learn about higher education with and from people who feel the same way?

If so, CAD offers two postgraduate qualifications which might interest you.

Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (PGCertHELT) (60 points)

In this programme you will work with fellow teaching staff to reflect on your current practices and your students' learning, and to relate these to Higher Education Research and Theory.

The Certificate is made up of two 30-point courses, and is designed to allow it to be taken over two years, or completed in a single year, depending on the needs of each participant.

Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (PGDipHELT) (120 points)

In this programme, you will combine class work and independent project work to develop personal understandings of the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching.

The Diploma is made up of four 30 point courses, including those taken during the Certificate. The Diploma can be completed (part-time) in between two and four years, as suits individual participants:

For further information about the PHELT programmes, please contact Bernadette.

Email: Bernadette.Knewstubb@vuw.ac.nz

Exploring the Learning-Teaching Nexus – Bernadette Knewstubb

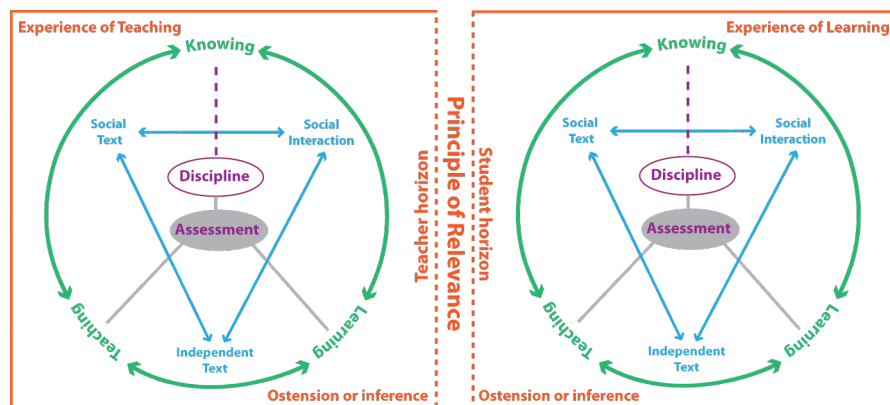
Have you ever noticed how, even in the most learning-centred classes, students and academics come away thinking that completely different things have been said and meant? I did, and have recently completed a PhD, *The Learning-Teaching Nexus in Higher Education: Teaching and learning in lectures as communication*, looking at the ways students' and lecturers' beliefs about learning and teaching affected their communication in lectures.

Looking at the huge amount of research that has investigated teaching and learning I realised that higher education research generally separates students' and teachers' experiences. Student researchers have found that students' assumptions about learning, knowing and teaching affect their approaches to study, and therefore learning outcomes. Parallel to this, teaching academics' assumptions have been found to affect both what they teach and how they teach it. However, very few researchers talk about the relationships between students and academics.

In my study I found that the relationship between teaching and learning was highly complex (surprise, surprise). Any time that students and their teachers (whether lecturers, tutors, or even other students) come together to teach and learn, a lot is

happening, as shown in the model below. To start with, individual beliefs affect how lecturers decide to communicate ideas and how students interpret what they hear. But in addition, communicative processes depend on what we decide is important to say (teach) or listen to (learn) and how

their reasoning is completely different. So the take-away message? We need to think about what we want to communicate, not just what we want to say when we teach, and we need to help our students learn to focus on what the speaker means, rather than just what the content says. I'm hoping to expand



we link those key points together. So even when an excellent lecturer and an excellent student share the same beliefs, they may mis-communicate, because they focus on different things, and link them together in different ways. On the other hand, even if beliefs are quite different, students and lecturers may communicate very effectively when they focus on the same key points and link them in the same ways – even if

my research to look at different disciplines, and different learning-teaching contexts (such as tutorials, readings, online forums, etc.), so don't be surprised if you receive an email from me at some stage in the future, asking if you'd like to help me explore this. Also, if you'd like to talk to me more about my work, or communicating effectively with students, please feel free to contact me, Bernadette.Knewstubb@vuw.ac.nz.

Update: The staff capability strand of the Digital Technology Initiative - Phase II

Developing the confidence and capability of Victoria staff in using digital technologies in teaching and learning is a key objective of the University 2012-2014 Strategic Initiative. This objective is being addressed by creating a network of faculty-based contacts for academic technologies (CATs). The CATs are a group of technology-savvy, part-time staff who are tasked with helping Victoria academics in their allocated Faculties and Schools to use both enterprise-level and discipline-specific teaching and learning applications, tools and resources. They will also organise and facilitate school and faculty good practice sharing events.

In 2012 CATs collected data from 300 academics across the University on their current practices with digital technologies, their views and attitudes to using digital tools in their courses, and on the kinds of support and professional development that would help them in using technology more

effectively and efficiently in achieving course objectives.

In 2012 CAD also designed a set of new reports that address the teaching and learning practices in using Blackboard. These reports are grounded in research-informed understanding of effective teaching and learning practices in Higher Education. The reports have been developed with the support from the ITS Applications Group, and will be implemented in March 2013.

After 10 years of using Blackboard, little is known about its value in improving the quality of learning. Past Victoria surveys suggest that, overall, students and staff think that Blackboard plays a positive role in supporting teaching and learning at Victoria. With over 90% of all enrolled students using Blackboard for at least one of their courses, and around 85% of undergraduate courses

now having Blackboard presence, it is likely that Victoria is approaching a plateau in basic Blackboard adoption. This has been achieved through gradual bottom-up adoption and integration processes, without an explicit push from the University, in the absence of policies mandating the use of Blackboard as a medium of course delivery. The question however remains, whether the Victoria academic community has moved beyond the basic adoption of Blackboard, and is using it to enhance the quality of student learning experiences and create a more engaging learning environment. This question is being addressed this year by using the new reports to examine Blackboard usage data for indicators of effective learning and student engagement.

The findings of the Faculty-based needs analysis and Blackboard usage reports will be used to inform CATs' activities during Phase II of the strategic initiative project.

New Resources on Inclusive Teaching & Creative and Critical Thinking

Last year from June to November, Mary Roberts and Deborah Laurs were seconded for ten weeks each from their positions as Senior Learning Advisers at Student Learning Support Service to work at CAD and develop some teaching resources for the CAD wiki. The learning advisors at SLSS work with students from a wide range of backgrounds and our practice leads us to focus on the strengths and challenges of a diverse student body and how best to ensure that all students are equally included in the learning and teaching process. CAD provided a welcoming and supportive environment in which we could contextualise and expand upon this experience.

Mary's comments

My research focussed on inclusive learning and teaching. When developing the resources I conducted a literature review and talked with VUW students from a wide range of backgrounds (including, international, refugee background, learning disability, Maori, Pasifika, and LGBT). Although all the students I talked to mentioned situations at VUW which could have been more inclusive, they also had warm praise for the many lecturers and tutors they had encountered who had made them feel welcomed and included in the university environment and had thus supported their study. My next step will be to talk to teaching staff about their experience of inclusive learning and teaching.

After reading widely on the subject, talking to students and reflecting on my own experience and practice, I concluded that inclusive teaching



- Ensures that students are not marginalised or excluded from university education because of who they are
- Does not require students or staff to become or “pass” as mainstream in order to succeed at university
- Welcomes diversity and sees diverse students and staff as enriching the university
- Works to create a place where all students and staff can thrive
- Recognises that the playing field is not level and we need to take action to create a diverse and inclusive university

To find out more about inclusive teaching please visit the CAD website at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/What_is_inclusive_teaching or contact me on mary.roberts@vuw.ac.nz

Deborah's comments

My secondment to CAD addressed the development of Graduate Attributes, particularly creative and critical thinking skills.

Based on a review of the literature and tertiary teaching and learning websites from UK, US and Australasia, the wiki that I developed contains pages on Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, and—because separating the two proved remarkably difficult — ‘Critical and Creative Thinking’, each organised under the following headings:

- **Theories:** i.e. assorted frameworks, models and rationales for each of the attributes, such as, for example, a breakdown of the developmental stages of students’ Critical Thinking abilities, and their implications for teaching and assessment, at each level of university study.
- **Teaching Resources:** as the name suggests —links to materials you can use to develop and assess your students’ thinking skills. Resources include classroom prompts and activities, exercises for students to undertake in their own time, and ‘tools’ ranging

from de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats to the Rationale software already used by Stuart Brock in PHIL103, and its free online cousin, Exploratree from the UK.

- **Literature:** selected articles from UK, US and Australasian higher education journals on issues such as the merits of generic versus embedded thinking skills courses, assessment techniques and subject-specific applications.



Perhaps unsurprisingly, my research unearthed more academic material on critical thinking than on creative thinking, where resources tend to focus on school teaching or entrepreneurial applications. Nevertheless, creative thinking is alive and well in tertiary institutions, as exemplified by Harvard and MIT’s ‘Picturing to Learn’ programme, which requires science students to convey key concepts in cartoon form, providing timely feedback on their level of understanding as a basis for further teaching and learning.

A second, complementary research phase involved inviting VUW and national teaching award winners to share their own experiences, hence the ‘quotable quotes’ introducing the wiki pages. In each case, their comments highlight the interactive nature of all learning and teaching —knowing where your students are coming from, allowing them to learn from their mistakes, and challenging them to excel within a supportive environment.

For more information about ways to develop Creative and Critical Thinking, visit www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Creative_and_Critical_Thinking, or contact me on deborah.laurs@vuw.ac.nz

Staff Excellence Awards

2012 Teaching Excellence Awards

The selection panel was presented with a strong field of candidates in 2012, with 15 portfolios submitted, including two team applications. It was pleasing to note that the portfolios all showed an admirable commitment to good teaching practice. Despite the strong field, only six awards could be made and the recipients were as follows:

Suzanne Boniface, School of Chemical and Physical Sciences

Suzanne is credited with having modernised the 100-level Chemistry curriculum through the introduction of innovative techniques such as the use of clickers, online quizzes and rapid feedback methods designed to encourage and motivate students.

Chris Bowden, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy

Chris has been awarded for sustained excellence in teaching over a range of courses each year. The portfolio he submitted showed evidence of a passionate and enthusiastic lecturer who provides transformative experiences that challenge the way students think, feel and respond to the world.

Anita Brady, School English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies

Anita's award recognises her willingness to consider new and innovative ways to keep students involved in learning. She designs course content and assessment practices that use 'fast feedback' and surveys in a way that is extremely commendable, as is the consultative way she interacts with colleagues on course design and delivery.

David Capie, School of History, Philosophy, Political Science & International Relations

David has a passion and enthusiasm for teaching which is clearly founded on empathy and respect for his students. He has a consistently strong teaching performance and is also a much sought after and highly effective supervisor at the postgraduate level. The award also recognised the positive impact he has on his colleagues in his role as a leader and a mentor.

Gina Grimshaw, School of Psychology

Gina's award recognises her sustained excellence in teaching over a range of courses each year, particularly in large, core courses in the Psychology curriculum. It was clear from the evidence provided in her portfolio that colleagues, as well as students, find her an inspirational teacher, who is credited with an increase in enrolments in PSYC231. The award also recognises Gina's commitment to students beyond the classroom.

David Harper and Maree Hunt, School of Psychology

David and Maree have received a team Teaching Excellence Award in recognition of their excellence in teaching the Behaviour Analysis content area of the Psychology curriculum, and their commitment to engaging students in thinking differently. Their tailored course content and delivery that engages and motivates students has led to improvements in pass rates, particularly amongst Māori and Pasifika students.

Tutor & demonstrator training

If you are appointing new tutors or demonstrators for Trimester One, then send them along to the tutor training workshops offered by CAD. These workshops have been developed to help prepare tutors to offer their students good learning experiences. The introductory three hour workshop focuses on basic teaching skills and concepts about learning. It covers ice breakers, getting your students involved, common problems encountered in tutorials and some possible solutions, University-wide resources and support. CAD also offers training for new demonstrators which focuses on skills required for lab-based teaching. Demonstrators will learn about asking and answering questions, formulating explanations for concepts and dealing with common problems that may occur in the laboratory.

Introductory workshops take place during the last week of February and the first week of March. Dates and times are now posted online so, if you have any new tutors or demonstrators starting this Trimester, please encourage them to visit the CAD website and register for their preferred session (<http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/cad/index.php>).

The University's Tutors' Collective Agreement now also requires that all new tutors (who have assessment responsibilities) participate in a Marking and Feedback workshop. These two-hour workshops will be in the 4th and 5th weeks of Trimester one. Participants can register for these online via the address above.



Blackboard drop-in sessions

These informal 'hands on' support sessions are for staff using Blackboard, who want a little more support. **Preparation** - you will need to have your own course in Blackboard and bring along the ideas and resources for the challenge you want to overcome. You can come for a few minutes or stay the whole hour! Feel free to bring your own laptop/tablet. Registration is recommended, support provided on a first-come first-served basis. **Prerequisite** - previously attended 'Introduction to Blackboard' workshop.

Please enrol at www.victoria.ac.nz/webstruxure/dotnet2/cad/

HELT503: Researching Higher Education

As part of the new Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (PHELT), this trimester CAD will offer a new course - HELT503 Researching Higher Education. It is a 30 point course which focuses on developing an educational research proposal related to the participant's teaching context. It is open to anyone who has completed HELT 501, the previous PHELT Certificate and, in special situations, graduates of other postgraduate Higher Education courses.

The course comprises six fortnightly workshops (3 hours) and includes readings and discussion from the Higher Education literature as well as self-selected study of educational research approaches and methods. The course is assessed through Session Preparation Assignments (SPAs), a draft question and proposed methodology (2000 words) and a full research proposal/grant application (7000 words).

Course co-ordinator: Dr Amanda Gilbert amanda.gilbert@vuw.ac.nz