Cairnmillar INSTITUTE

Treatment | Education | Research

Excellence in Learning and Teaching Policy

Policy name	Excellence in Learning and Teaching Policy
Policy number	TLP015
Date approved	4 February 2015
Approving body	The Academic Board (Senatus)
Responsible officer	The Head of School
Implementation officer	The Deputy Head of School Course Coordinators
Next review date	June 2017
Linked policies	
Linked forms	

Purpose of this policy

The Cairnmillar Institute (the Institute) is committed to a student-centred success culture and a staff-centred enabling culture. The Institute gives the highest importance to ensuring consistently high quality learning experiences and outcomes for all its students and to supporting academic staff who are needed to achieve these goals.

Positive learning outcomes reflect an interplay between the teaching activities and learning environment provided by the Institute and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of its students. The following principles aim to guide excellence in learning and teaching practices, while recognising that effective learning and teaching involves a partnership between students and staff at the Institute.

Principles

1. Create an engaging, motivating, and intellectually stimulating learning experience.

2. Emphasise the importance, relevance, and integration of theory and knowledge with professional practice to ensure best possible outcomes for students and clients.

3. Provide learning experiences that develop inter-culturally capable graduates who can make a difference as socially and ethically responsible practitioners.

4. Value and recognise individual and cultural diversity through the provision of an inclusive context of support and respect for all students.

5. Enhance student engagement and learning through effective curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment strategies.

6. Continuously improve teaching practice through academic staff professional development, and critical reflection informed by a range of evaluation approaches.

Introduction

This Learning and Teaching Framework policy is designed to support:
- an excellent student learning experience that supports student success.
- the quality of teaching programs to a high level.
- students with teaching and learning programs that reflect the distinctive Cairnmillar experience.
- comprehensive support for students as they prepare for lifelong learning and employment.
- high professional standards in the provision of teaching and learning.
- an excellent campus environment to optimise student learning experience.
- key policy and supporting statements to inform and support Learning and Teaching practices.

The following principles represent a blueprint for achieving these immediate priorities and for assuring premium quality learning and teaching experiences at the Institute in the longer term. The principles are informed by a strong evidence base and represent enduring and internationally recognised standards of learning and teaching in higher education.
The principles respect the wide range of learning and teaching processes and outcomes that arise as a result of such factors as diverse student cohorts, disciplinary differences, curriculum design, academic staff experience, and modes of delivery.

It is essential that each member of staff interpret and operationalise these Principles as appropriate, within their own context, guided by evidence-based approaches and in consultation with colleagues. The Principles are designed to shape collegial conversations about learning and teaching goals, practices and policies. They also assist academic staff to gather and document evidence of the ways in which they contribute to high quality learning and teaching at the Institute.

Each academic staff member must enact the Principles in their own unique way, and the Principles are manifested in different ways across individual courses and programs. The following section outlines some examples of learning and teaching activities that illustrate ways in which the Principles might be reflected in practice.

Principle 1:
Create an engaging, motivating, and intellectually stimulating learning experience.

To apply this Principle, a lecturer may:

- model and exemplify for students the excitement of discovery and creativity in the exploration of ideas and the solution of significant and real problems

- find ways to present appropriately challenging learning activities in an enthusiastic, interesting, enjoyable and dynamic way

- foster active participation and enthusiastic engagement in learning activities

- encourage mutual recognition of the talents, aspirations and background knowledge that learners and teaching staff bring to the learning environment design learning activities and assessment that foster and encourage creativity

- ensure that content is informed by current developments and new ideas in research and practice in the discipline

- design learning experiences that emphasise the interactive and social dimensions of learning, such as group-work and research-based assignments, in both real and virtual contexts

- strategically and systematically blend online and other IT learning experiences in combination with high quality face-to-face learning environments to enhance student learning

- ensure that students have access to a rich array of information and learning resources that enable them to engage with the latest disciplinary research, problems and scholarly communities in the field

- encourage students to collaborate with each other as part of the learning process. This could take the form of activities such as groupwork, contributions to online discussion boards, group-based assignments or peer assessment

- facilitate regular interaction between students and between students and staff, other scholars, practitioners or community members. This may include such strategies as group-based projects, work-integrated learning activities, and community-based projects.

- design activities and assessment that support students in becoming independent learners and to take responsibility for their own learning

- celebrate and give due recognition to student achievements.

Excellence in Learning and Teaching Policy
This policy was approved by The Academic Board of The Cairnmillar Institute
Page | 4

Principle 2:
Encourage the spirit of critical inquiry and creative innovation informed by current research

To apply this Principle, a lecturer may:

- provide examples from one's own research to illustrate concepts, paradigms and issues

- draw attention to key paradigms, questions, historical challenges in the discipline area

- integrate students' discoveries, opinions and inferences in the learning process through a flexible approach to curriculum design and course content

- design activities and assessment where students pose research questions and investigate the answers

- design curricula that involve students in research activities, or in improvements in practices or approaches adopted in the field

- ensure that students have the opportunity to acquire information literacy skills to support all aspects of their learning

- make use of problem-based learning, problem-solving approaches and other strategies that clearly aim to build skills in analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and hypothesis testing

- demonstrate a research-informed approach to learning and teaching by:

    - drawing on personal research to illustrate key concepts, theories and questions

    - integrating current disciplinary research findings into the curriculum

    - placing current research in the field within its historical context, including discredited theories and recent debates

    - providing learning tasks that involve critical analysis of research papers

    - designing learning tasks that build skills and knowledge in research methodologies

    - designing learning activities around contemporary research issues

    - demonstrating disciplinary research and practice processes and techniques and providing opportunities for students to apply these approaches as appropriate

    - involving students in research and practice team assignments

    - inviting colleagues and postgraduate students to present on their research

    - designing assessment tasks that provide opportunities to develop knowledge and skills relating to research and professional practice.

Principle 3:
Emphasise the importance, relevance, and integration of theory and knowledge with professional practice to develop solutions to real world issues.

To apply this Principle, a lecturer may:

- provide illustrations from one's own professional or discipline-based practice toillustrate concepts, skills, and knowledge relating to the discipline

- illustrate the relevance and significance of curriculum content and learning activities to professional, discipline, real world, and/ or personal contexts

- provide opportunities for students to contextualise their learning by providing links between individual courses and the broader program of study, and the relevance and application of their learning to the workplace

- focus learning on the investigation of authentic disciplinary issues or on problem solving of real issues of social, cultural, environmental or economic significance develop learning activities that include reference to current affairs and issues as they
- relate to the discipline

- provide learning experiences that emulate professional and disciplinary practice or address real professional and disciplinary practice problems

- design curricula, learning tasks, and assessment that provide students with opportunities to apply their disciplinary knowledge in real-world work and practice settings

- invite community and industry representatives to present guest lectures, seminars or other activities

- liaise with industry/community/professional partners to ensure that the benefits of workplace learning are maximised and are mutual

- regularly review courses and programs and consult with stakeholder groups (including community, business, government and NGOs, the professions, graduates and students) to ensure that curriculum and course content appropriately reflect industry and professional needs and standards

- actively and regularly engage with community, government bodies, professionals, businesses and other work places to negotiate opportunities for student work placements to enable students to apply their disciplinary skills and knowledge and/or to create new knowledge or innovative solutions to real problems in those workplace contexts

- encourage students to apply their disciplinary knowledge and research through active involvement in community projects or volunteering

- communicate to students the findings of consultancies and community projects to foster an awareness of the public nature and relevance of Institute scholarship.

Principle 4:
Provide learning experiences that develop inter-culturally capable graduates who can make a difference as socially and ethically responsible global citizens.

To apply this Principle, a lecturer may:

- model respectful and culturally competent interactions with students

- make use of case studies and illustrations of ethical and professional dilemma

- integrate ethical issues and approaches into students' inquiry-based learning and assessment activities

- make use of cooperative and team tasks to increase opportunities for interaction between students in cross-cultural groups

- use examples, case studies and resource materials that draw on cross-cultural comparisons

- include materials and learning experiences which draw upon information relating to other countries and cultures relevant to the area of study

- encourage students to participate in international exchange opportunities

- include curriculum content, where appropriate, relating to international, inter-cultural and indigenous perspectives

- encourage students from different cultural backgrounds to contribute relevant examples from their home country or community

- make use of learning activities that encouraged students to engage with others from different backgrounds (e.g. work in multi-cultural teams or to make contact with international students from their disciplines in overseas universities via email, chatrooms, or list-serves)

- develop and use assessment tasks that are aligned with curriculum content that relates to the development of international and intercultural perspectives

- actively encourage students to join international associations that are affiliated with their disciplines.

Principle 5:
Value and recognize individual and cultural diversity through the provision of an inclusive context of support and respect for all students.

To apply this Principle, a lecturer may:

- be a role model for respectful behaviour

- acknowledge the value of student input

- demonstrate and foster among the class a respect for student diversity in all its forms (e.g. religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds) in formal teaching settings and in the curriculum

- establish ground rules for group discussions, and apply quick action in the case of any discriminatory student comments or behaviours create group-based opportunities to learn more about students' backgrounds through such tools as student surveys or brief 'getting to know you' ice-breaker activities

- learn students' names and find out about their interests

- create a safe, non-threatening learning environment in which students are encouraged to express their own views and opinions while respecting those of peers and staff in a respectful intellectual context

- emphasise the value of student diversity in the learning context and the benefits of learning from different individual and cultural viewpoints and perspectives

- use examples, case studies and resource materials that demonstrate cultural sensitivity and respect for the diversity of the student body design early formative assessment tasks designed to gauge students' background knowledge so as to determine any gaps in requisite knowledge or skills and the necessary support required by students who may be at risk of failure

- adapt the pace of teaching to accommodate different learning styles, while maintaining rigour and standards

- provide students with the necessary information about institutional support to assist them to manage learning and personal issues, especially during times of stress so as to reduce the risk of attrition or failure

- take part in professional development activities designed to enhance intercultural awareness, including strategies for assessing and providing feedback to students from non-English speaking backgrounds

- provide opportunities for students to develop oral presentation skills and use of multimedia technologies in a supportive context
design assessment activities that encourage students to make use of campus spaces – whether real or virtual, particularly in group settings that encourage students to meet and socialise outside of formal classes

- introduce peer mentoring schemes that include later year mentors supporting early year students in order to vertically integrate students across year levels

- include later year students in lectures or transition support programs that help students to develop a sense of belonging to the Institute, campus and disciplinary community

- build cross-disciplinary connections with other courses to ensure that students have maximum exposure to a range of learning and social experiences

- invite participation by students from all years in cultural and intellectual events such as public lectures and performances

- encourage and support students in extracurricular activities and in the formation of social and intellectual communities on campus

- extend the notion of 'campus' to include the virtual campus environment (when and if become available) and ensure that students who are studying in mixed or online modes have comparable opportunities to on-campus students in terms of access to and engagement with the Institute, its services and learning experiences.

Excellence in Learning and Teaching Policy
This policy was approved by The Academic Board of The Cairnmillar Institute
Page | 8

Principle 6:
Enhance student engagement and learning through effective curriculum design, pedagogy, use of technology, and assessment strategies.

To apply this Principle, a lecturer may:

- clearly communicate the goals and objectives of courses and programs

- explicitly link teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks to learning objectives

- ensure that learning objectives are clearly aligned with the graduate attributes of the Institute and the relevant discipline-specific attributes associate with the course and that this is made explicit to the students

- include, where appropriate, content that is aligned with the signature aspects of the Griffith Experience (work integrated learning and internationalised curriculum)

- ensure that curriculum is up-to-date, relevant and future focused

- design valid and reliable assessment that ensures academic standards are maintained at the highest level appropriate

- design assessment that is fair and has standards appropriate for the discipline

- ensure reliable processes for marking and assignment of grades, with consistent and systematic moderation processes used within and across courses provide clear information about course and assessment requirements, the criteria by which work is to be judged, and the standards expected for high performance

- provide timely and targeted feedback on assessment that is designed to enhance students' learning and that takes account of individual learning needs

- use a combination of formative and summative assessments, with opportunity for students to benefit from early feedback

- ensure the appropriate spread and timing of assessment tasks, considering student workloads within and across subjects in the timing of assessments

- make use of a range of teaching and assessment strategies to take into account different learning styles

- make use of ICTs where to facilitate student learning, i.e. where appropriate (e.g., podcasts, online material, and other forms of ICT)

- ensure that students are made aware of issues and policies relating to academic integrity and penalties associated with breaches

- where possible, provide flexibility in terms of delivery of course content and type/timing of assessment.

Excellence in Learning and Teaching Policy
This policy was approved by The Academic Board of The Cairnmillar Institute
Page | 9

Principle 7:
Continuously improve teaching practice through participation in professional development, and critical reflection informed by a range of evaluation approaches.

To apply this Principle, a lecturer may:

- regularly monitor how effectively students are engaging with learning in their courses and programs

- seek feedback from students and peers and engage in a continuous cycle of improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and responding accordingly

- use student feedback about teaching, courses and programs to examine and justify possible changes to curricula and teaching

- provide feedback to students regarding ways in which they have improved the course in response to their feedback (closing the loop)

- make use of peer (colleague) mentoring or peer observation strategies to improve their teaching

- investigate student learning more formally by designing an action research study to address a particular issue or problem that needs attention attend and contribute to learning and teaching seminars at the Group and Institute level

- participate in local and Institute networks in the scholarship of learning and teaching

- disseminate findings related to teaching and learning to their own discipline, other staff, and more broadly within the higher education sector

- draw on evidence relating to learning and teaching scholarship from journal publications, conferences, GIHE website, seminars, workshops etc.

- develop scholarly practice through professional development activities

- enrol in a further education program such as the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education

- publish and apply the results of their scholarly investigations into their teaching and provide feedback on their findings to students

- be a contributing member of disciplinary societies and organisations that enable up-to-date access to the latest disciplinary research

- regularly check out new content on the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

References

Griffith University: http://www.griffith.edu.au/learning-teaching