

Teaching and Learning  
*at* Curtin

2009

# Teaching and Learning *at* Curtin

“The aim of teaching is simple: it is to make student learning possible”.

(Ramsden, 2002, p. 7)<sup>1</sup>

**Published 2009 by:**

Office of Teaching and Learning  
Curtin University of Technology  
GPO Box U1987  
Perth, Western Australia 6845

---

<sup>1</sup> Ramsden, P. (2002). *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*. London: Routledge

## INTRODUCTION: WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR AND HOW IT WORKS

Welcome to teaching and learning at Curtin in 2009. This book is intended as a guide for anyone involved in helping students to learn at Curtin. Because this is such a vast topic, this book focuses on the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience—at the course, unit and teacher level—and how to ensure our students have excellent learning experiences.

In essence, **every time a student enrolls, we want to ensure their experience is excellent and enhances their education and employability as graduates.** The key to quality is to engage the student and develop their higher order thinking skills, their initiative and problem-solving abilities—we want students to be work-ready by engaging them in active learning experiences which prepare them for the future. We want to be very sure that assessment tasks really do measure what we intend, and that students are encouraged to learn through helpful and timely feedback. And we want to use feedback to improve the experience.

We know that, at Curtin, we perform very well in many aspects of teaching and learning; however, we can also identify areas in which we need to develop greater expertise (assessment and feedback, for example). Therefore, this book has essential information on all aspects of the learning experience for teaching staff in any role; course coordinators, unit coordinators, face-to-face and online teachers, tutors, laboratory demonstrators, supervisors, and so on.

The book has some aids for busy readers:



This symbol indicates a **key point** for busy readers.



This symbol indicates a matter in which **policy compliance** is expected from all staff.



This symbol indicates **recommended further reading**.



This symbol indicates a **downloadable resource**.

## CONTENTS

How to be a great teacher: Ten quick tips .....	4
1. Curtin's philosophy of teaching and learning .....	6
2. The Curtin learning environment .....	10
3. Ensuring quality course and unit experiences .....	14
4. Developing appropriate assessment tasks .....	25
5. Giving feedback which encourages learning .....	46
6. Dealing with plagiarism .....	49
7. Creating engaging learning experiences .....	53
8. Flexible delivery at Curtin .....	62
9. Creating engaging learning resources.....	63
10. Evaluating teaching and learning at Curtin .....	65
11. Teaching and learning staff development.....	71
12. Recognising excellent teaching .....	72
13. Staff obligations: Where to find policies.....	73
14. Services to support teaching and learning.....	74

## TABLE OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1 Curtin's Graduate Attributes .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Figure 2 Curtin's triple-i curriculum.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Figure 3 Curtin enrolments in Australia and beyond, 2008.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Figure 4 Curtin's organisational structure January 2009 .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Figure 5 Bentley, Perth City and West Australian School of Mines campus dates for 2009.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Figure 6 Bloom's Taxonomy with star ratings and Assessment verbs.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Figure 7 The relationship between course learning outcomes and unit learning outcomes .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Figure 8 The Five Phases of Moderation.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Figure 9 Marking Guide showing quality and dimensions of performance .....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Figure 10 An example of a generic (re-useable) Marking Guide for problem-solving.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Figure 11 Curtin's Grading System.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Figure 12 eVALUate Unit Survey Items .....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Figure 13 eVALUate Unit Survey Reports .....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Figure 14 eVALUate Full Unit Reports can be viewed in various formats.....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Figure 15 A sample eVALUate Course Summary Report.....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Figure 16 A sample eVALUate Owing Organisation Summary Report .....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Figure 17 A sample eVALUate Unit Summary Report.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Figure 18 Feedback on feedback: responding to eVALUate in the unit outline.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Figure 19 eVALUate Teaching Survey items.....</i>	<i>70</i>

# HOW TO BE A GREAT TEACHER: TEN QUICK TIPS

## 1. Know and love your subject

Keep up-to-date in your field, actively engage in industry and research developments, and ensure your teaching shows your passion for your subject. Students can learn a lot from text books, but only you can share your industry experience with them.

## 2. Focus on student learning—always

Make sure you explain (repeatedly) the learning outcomes to your students, why they need to achieve them, and how they will be assessed. Students usually respond positively when they understand what they have to do, and why. Remind students that what really matters is their learning, and that your role is to help them achieve the learning outcomes. For more information on creating good learning outcomes, see page 17.

## 3. Do less telling, and more engaging

Engaged students are more likely to turn up to class; disengaged ones will get the notes and be somewhere else. When they come to class, resist the temptation to tell students everything—get them to do things with information, to apply it to scenarios and case studies. As new graduates they will need to ‘know their stuff’, but they will also need social intelligence—how to work in teams, negotiate, solve problems, and so on—these things are rarely learnt from textbooks. For more information on how to engage students in class or online, see page 53.

## 4. Assess the learning outcomes—nothing more and nothing less!

Assessment tasks are opportunities for students to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes (which should focus on higher order thinking skills, not memorisation). Assessments are not punishments or traps to catch students out, or ways to ‘keep them working’. If you use group assessment, make sure it is justified (lightening your marking load is not an acceptable justification), and that students have a chance to perform as individuals. For more information on creating appropriate assessment tasks, see page 25.

## 5. Give effective feedback that stimulates deeper learning

We all learn better when we feel encouraged. When you mark students’ work, return it as soon as you can, and give students rich directions for improvement. For more information on techniques for giving constructive feedback, see page 46.

## 6. Interact positively

Ensure your interaction with students is constructive and positive and in keeping with Curtin’s Guiding Ethical Principles. Ensure you make time to be available to students—advertise those times, and make sure you’re there.

## 7. Be organised

Students must have clear, well-organised unit outlines indicating what will occur, when and why. Expect students to be punctual, and be punctual yourself, giving plenty of notice if classes need to be cancelled. For more information on how to prepare a unit outline, see page 15.

## 8. Communicate your passion for your subject and be an inspiration!

You probably teach in a university because you have expert knowledge in a subject you love. Not all students will share your level of enthusiasm—some will love this subject, others will not. Even so, engage unwilling students by explaining how their learning might apply to some

aspect of their lives. Reflect on what it was, and is, that inspires you to pursue your learning in your subject, and try to emulate that for your students.

### **9. Evaluate your teaching and act on student feedback**

During the semester, regularly ask students what is helping their learning, and what is not. Formal student feedback (through **eVALUate**) is valuable in helping you improve your teaching skills. Respond to all feedback by telling your students about the changes you intend to implement, and why. For more information on evaluating teaching, see page 65.

### **10. Get a peer mentor and keep a professional portfolio**

Consider inviting a colleague to act as a critical friend to comment on or review your teaching and provide supportive feedback. Keep a portfolio - a collection of peer and student feedback as well as your own reflections on what worked and what didn't. You may even like to try an online portfolio (to be piloted at Curtin in 2009 for staff and students).



**A highly recommended quick and easy read with practical tips:**

Race, P. & Pickford, R. (2007). *Making teaching work*, London: Sage Publications.