

2017

Editorial 14.1

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Recommended Citation

Percy, A., & Parrish, D. R. (2017). Editorial 14.1. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 14(1).
<https://doi.org/10.53761/1.14.1.1>

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This article is available in Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol14/iss1/8>

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This first issue for 2017 contains seven papers that broadly cover topics related to educational evaluation, sessional teaching, and language pedagogy and support.

Focusing on educational evaluation at a general level, **Huber** outlines a practical evaluation framework for small-scale learning and teaching projects suggesting that a well-designed plan and more focussed evaluation outcomes can assist with the general adoption of learning and teaching innovation. The framework is designed as an evidence-based flexible framework that can be adapted to specific contexts and aims to provide project teams with a structure and process to plan and implement evaluation strategies. Bringing the lens of evaluation into a specific context of innovation in assessment, **El Maaddawy and Deneen** report on a study evaluating the implementation of an Outcomes Based Learning (OBL) framework in a postgraduate Engineering course. Concerned primarily with the evaluation framework, they ask: how can assessment tasks function within an OBL framework to evaluate student attainment of learning outcomes; and what does direct and indirect evidence indicate regarding the effectiveness of an OBL approach that utilises innovative assessment? Drawing on data collected directly through the analysis of student work in assessment tasks, and indirectly through a student self-assessment survey of course outcomes and course evaluation survey, the authors' findings suggest that while these data sources were meaningful, the development of more fine-tuned instruments for evaluating OBL and innovative assessment would be worthwhile for producing more nuanced evidence of impact. Within the online learning space, **Jacobi** used an anonymous online survey with open-ended questions in one subject to gather evidence of students' perceptions of the utility and structure of online discussion. Identifying through the literature that student engagement in online discussion is as much a function of structure and strategies as it is social presence and authentic topics, **Jacobi** found that students found most effective in terms of structure included structured and relevant discussion prompts, small group placement, visible postings and timeframe. **Brown, White, Bowmar and Power** provide a comprehensive validity study of a tool – the that can be used to measure students' attitudes to the particular subjects they are studying – the Attitude to the Subject of Physiology Inventory (ASPI). They suggest that such a tool could be used by educators to gain insights into the effects of the curriculum on their students' attitude.

Shifting the focus to the experience and professional needs of sessional teachers, **Williams and Beovich** report on an exploratory pilot study using qualitative methods to inform recommendations for attending to the professional needs of paramedic sessional teachers. Conducted a thematic analysis of interview data with thirty-six sessional educators, the authors identified five key themes: a lack of formality in communication, feedback and recruitment processes; program inconsistencies in relation to expectations, course information, and continuity; preparation for teaching in terms of staff qualifications and in-house development; connections and support in the form of working relationships and space; professional development and academic support; and educator benefits.

Finally, drawing attention to language pedagogy within a modern languages context, **Caruso, Gadd Colombi and Tebbit** call for the reconceptualization of the teaching and assessment of listening, from a focus on comprehension – the product of listening – to a focus on the process of 'how' to listen. The authors report on the use of a blended learning approach to provide students with multiple formative opportunities to practice their listening activities (online quizzes) prior to a final relatively low-stakes summative assessment. The student survey evaluation demonstrated a high level of student engagement and a strong perception from students that the opportunity to practice at their own time and pace assisted them improve their listening skills. With regard to the

English language proficiency of higher education students, **Wong, Lawsin Delante and Wang** report on the use of a Post Entry Language Assessment (PELA) at a Singapore campus to identify and support students with their English language skills. Their study correlates the students' PELA results with their subject results to examine the predictive validity of the PELA score, and uses student feedback to assess the usefulness of the workshops as perceived by the students themselves. Their study finds a correlation between language proficiency and student performance and suggests contextualised language workshops can be useful for students who score poorly on the test.

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Lead Editors

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