2012

Coordinators leading the advancement of sessional staff: A CLASS act

Geraldine Lefoe  
*University of Wollongong, glefoe@uow.edu.au*

Dominique R. Parrish  
*University of Wollongong, dparrish@uow.edu.au*

Jo McKenzie  
*University of Technology Sydney*

Janne Malfroy  
*University of Western Sydney*

Yoni Ryan  
*University of Canberra*

Publication Details

Coordinators leading the advancement of sessional staff: A CLASS act

Abstract
A presentation.

Disciplines
Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

This conference paper is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/smhpapers/2962
Subject Coordinators: Leading Professional development for Sessional Staff

aka

Coordinators Leading Advancement of Sessional Staff

Support for this initiative has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The views expressed in this workshop do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.
Dominique Parrish, Geraldine Lefoe, Yoni Ryan, Janne Malfroy, Jo McKenzie
Why leadership development for coordinators leading sessional teams?

- the role of the academic supervisor of sessional teachers is often the most crucial in establishing quality processes in teaching and learning
- there is little formal acknowledgement of or support for the subject coordinator’s leadership role in ensuring quality teaching practices
- there are virtually no instances of formalised standards of practice or professional development for the subject coordinator’s role in managing the teaching team

The RED report, 2008, p. 13
Terms

• **Subject co-ordinator** leads & manages all academic activity at the subject or unit level

• **Sessional teaching staff** - those employed on a teaching session basis - Lecturer, Tutor, Demonstrator, Course/Unit/Subject Co-ordinator, Course/Unit/Subject Designer, Clinical Supervisor, Practicing Professional, Conjoint & honorary appointment, Auditor of marks & grade, Laboratory Supervisor, Field Supervisor, and Casual Marker
Challenges

• Recruiting, inducting & developing teaching team
• Starting out & the problems of inadequate handover
• Establishing & maintaining teaching & assessment standards, in distributed, multi-locational and transnational environments
• Designing & operating communication & working within technology-enabled, flexible environments
• Integrating support services
• Maintaining subject quality, collaborative & collegiate relationships in a context where team members, including the subject coordinator, often feel undervalued, isolated and unrecognised
More challenges

- Working collaboratively to deliver coherent programs
- Managing research-versus-teaching agenda, which limits prospects for promotion
- Time pressures and inequitable workloads
- Feeling unprepared & untrained for variety, volume of student issues that arise
- Understanding & managing infrastructure & complex administrative systems
- Feeling frustrated & incapable of performing role effectively & uncertainty about scope of role
Building on success

- Distributed Leadership Project – Faculty Scholars
- Leadership capacity developed through action-learning project within authentic context of individual’s work practice & supported by formal leadership-capacity development & reflective practices.
- Integrated Competing Values Framework (iCVF) developed by Tricia Vilkinas and her colleagues (Vilkinas, Ladyshewsky & Saebel 2009)
People focus

- Innovator
  - Is innovative & sees need for changes
  - Reflects, considers, monitors and applies strategy

Internal focus
- Developer
  - Cares for others & develops teams
- Integrator
  - Monitors outcomes & quality of T & L
- Monitor
  - Gets the job done, Provides structure

External focus
- Broker
  - Exerts influence, develops networks outside the school
- Deliverer
  - Gets the job done, Provides structure

Task focus
Implementation & Evaluation

• Phase 1: pilot PD workshop program to introduce 39 participants from collaborating institutions to an action-learning process that engaged the teaching team in collaborative activity.

• 25 completed process with their teams – facilitator role for AD

• Phase 2 – cascading improved program to 170 people from 26 institutions through national roadshow as an embedded dissemination strategy.
Framework

- Formal workshops
  - 1 day for subject coordinators & AD facilitator
  - Half day for AD;
- Authentic action-learning projects;
- Reflective practice;
- Communities of practice; &
- Networking
Overview – Day 1

9.30  Welcome & introductions
9.45  Speed dating, Introducing the iCVF and identifying leadership roles and capabilities
11.00 Morning tea
11.30 Good practices in working with sessional staff
12.45 Lunch
1.30  Good practice videoclips
2.30  Planning development of a leadership role
3.00  Coffee on the run
3.15  Action planning in institutional groups
3.50  Evaluation & Future directions
The CLASS Project outcomes

• An adaptable leadership capacity development framework
• Increased leadership capacity of subject coordinators
• Improved communication & teamwork in teaching teams involved, through the focus on action-learning projects
• Large-scale practice sharing through the national workshop program and the classleadership.com website
• Raised awareness of strategies for influencing policy & procedures to acknowledge contributions of all
• Resources such as trigger videos and sample collection of institutional policies, guidelines and practices
Resources

Guidelines & Templates
FOR INSTITUTIONAL, FACULTY & SUBJECT COORDINATOR USE IN LEADING & MANAGING SESSIONAL STAFF

www.classleadership.com

Scenario B: Dealing with Pressure

Summary
The Subject Coordinator is meeting with a tutor who is concerned about a decision he has made to permit an assignment after feeling pressured by a student. The discussion touches on strategies to deal with student pressure, the importance of assessment criteria, tutor-student relationships, tutor confidence, awareness, Subject Coordinator empathy and support.

Note: the scenario depicts some aspects of a longer meeting. It is critical to note that the Subject Coordinator returns the correct information about university policies in relation to student assessment and student Code of Ethics in having such a discussion.

Scenario C: Developing reliability in marking assessment tasks

Summary
Student complaints often focus on the variability of grades between tutors. Dealing with such a cause of anxiety among first-time tutors in particular, what are the “reasonable” expectations? Here, the Subject Coordinator is meeting with the Marketing 101 teaching team prior to marking a poster assignment. The discussion centres around marking judgements, competencies, assessment criteria, marking, reliability, and developing common standards.

Note: the scenario depicts some aspects of a longer meeting. Consider some options that you might as Subject Coordinator provide before this meeting, such as sample previous assignments, and certainly the marking criteria, as well complete criteria sheets from the previous assignment.

S1. Watch Scenario B: Dealing with Pressure
As you watch the video, consider the following questions:

How does the Subject Coordinator:
• take the experience of the tutor
• affirm the tutor’s actions
• demonstrate that they are listening carefully
• provide support and build confidence in the tutor
• explain the tutor role and responsibilities
• provide advice about dealing with similar future problems

S1. Watch Scenario C: Modelling and Standards
As you watch the video, consider the following questions:

How does the Subject Coordinator:
• explain the importance of this moderation meeting?
• explain the assessment criteria
• walk the idea of the tutors
• affirm the ideas of the tutors
• provide support
• build the team
• facilitate consensus
• provide clear expectations
• build understanding of the tutor role and responsibilities.

The discussion may lead to further discussion on the difference between criteria-based assessment and normative grading, one of the tutors suggests looking at a second assignment to see how they compare. This might suggest a partial reliance on comparative marking.
Participants

• “... the quality of marking is ensured. The marking criteria for each question ... have been refined thanks to the meetings with tutors who provided very valuable additional information. Students’ learning problems identified from marking their exam papers are noticed and discussed in the first place in an efficient way which will help all teaching staff to take corresponding actions in the future.”

“For me, the key challenge was to be brave and have the courage to try something different.”
“Having the subject coordinator involved [this way]... ensured a team teaching approach and alleviated any apprehension by sessional staff.”

“It is conceivable that this type of internship teaching programme can be modelled & adjusted to fit a broad range of large, first year subjects. It is important that any implementation of this style of teacher development needs to grow its own identity and by doing so will become an accepted & natural part of the teacher training scheme for casual employees.”
CLASS
Coordinators Leading Advancement of Sessional Staff

WELCOME

Coordinators Leading Advancement of Sessional Staff (CLASS) is a project that has been funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). The project aims to support and enhance subject coordinators’ leadership and management of sessional teaching teams by developing quality processes, practices and resources that can be used across institutions.

The project builds on a key finding from the RED Report that subject coordinators have little support for developing their leadership and management of sessional teaching staff despite the fact that sessional teachers are critical in ensuring quality learning experiences for students.

The CLASS project will:

- develop contextually appropriate resources for coordinators to use in their leadership and management of sessional teaching teams
- enhance coordinators’ capacity to lead their teaching teams in the context of their own subjects.
- engage coordinators in reflective practices about their own leadership development within a collegial and supportive network of peers.
- establish and disseminate good practice models for leadership and management of sessional teaching teams
- identify and promote the alignment between policy and practice.

http://classleadership.com/  glefoe@uow.edu.au