Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2008: Dr Stephen Torre (JCU)

For enhancing positive student engagement in university literaty studies through student-centred learning curricula incorporating advanced methodologies in humanities and authentic assessment.

Overview

In this application I refer to several subjects which I have re-developed significantly over the last half-decade: Australian Literature; The Avant-Garde in the Twentieth Century; and SelJ; Science and Society in Eighteenth-Century Literature. In these subjects my aim is to encourage positive engagement and student-centred learning in relation to local and international social, historical and cultural issues, as reflected in literature and associated arts. Students in provincial areas of Australia often do not have the exposure to the arts and intellectual life which characterize major metropolitan areas. Yet artistic and creative discourses are unparalleled sources of knowledge about the individual, humanity, society, history and culture. In order to expand students' knowledge and understanding of these areas I use the following strategies:

development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field through implementing

advanced methodologies in humanities studies and employing multimedia resources for local and --- global contextualizacon of issues and ideas;
approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning, particularly authentic
assessment and positive student engagement in class activities.

Criterion 2: Development of curricula, resources and services that reflect a command of the field

In their third year, students of English take a subject on

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date knowledge

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underpins the development of students' critical and analytical skills. Vocalizing the written lecture text is as important as vocalizing the poem. Recently, in adapting my subjects for external delivery, I have tried to preserve the 'presence' of the lecture by recording it and podcasting it on JCU's online flexible delivery software. Although I have no formal response data on this as yet, when I asked external students which was more valuable, the written lecture text or the podcast of the lecture (complete with classroom noises, questions and activities) all replies insisted that the podcast was the more interesting, and helped to clarify material in the written lecture. The more channels of communication open, the better, it seems; even the internal students have expressed unequivocal approval of the podcast.

Contribution to student learning

Over the last three years the Australian Literature subject has attracted increasing student enrolments; the attrition rate, an identified concern at James Cook University, has shown some improvement; and the most noticeable result has been that in the distribution of grades, numbers are pushing to the higher edges of grades, with students often gaining University prizes for their work in this subject. In a James Cook University instrument 'Student Feedback on Subjects', recent ratings have been high: for the quality of the learning experience in Australian Literature 90% of students rated the subject Acceptable, score = 3 or More than Acceptable, score = 4 (on a five-point scale 4 is an exceptional score, with the university average hovering around 3.2). For recent