

*For enthusing students about soil science through a focus on discovery, critical environmental issues and the application of contemporary teaching and learning principles*

**OVERVIEW: SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTION AND CONTEXT**

Is soil science relevant, interesting or useful? Since joining James Cook University (JCU) in 2004 I have had the opportunity to work with students and staff on a range of projects. This has included the development of a new soil science course, the implementation of a range of innovative teaching and learning strategies, and the delivery of a range of professional development activities. The following provides an overview of my contributions to student learning and the context in which they have taken place.





average for virtually all criteria (Table 1). According to the 41 comments on the best aspects of the subject, students were most enthusiastic about the excellent organisation (16 comments), the interesting and useful nature of the practical exercises (16), the enthusiasm, approachability and quality of feedback provided by the lecturer (14), the nature of the assessment, especially the regular short quizzes (12) and the quality of the lectures and notes, including their accessibility online (11). It was also clear that the quality of the tutor in Townsville, Sue Berthelsen, was critical to the students' good experience (7 comments) and helped achieve my goal of maximising student engagement. Table 1 indicates the average student evaluation scores for 'Applied Soil Science' subject for the last 3 years, averaged across both campuses of delivery, compared to the University average. This demonstrates the very positive response from students to the teaching approach.

**Table 1. Student feedback scores for 'Applied Soil Science' (1-5 Likert scale)**

	2009		2010		2011	
	Subject	JCU	Subject	JCU	Subject	JCU
Response rate:	26%	17%	30%	13%	74%	11%