Foundation literacies
– a holistic approach

Tania Blanksby
Transition Coordinator
La Trobe University
Foundation literacies – *a holistic approach*

**Outline**

Two examples of communities of practice in STE, providing peer support and a sharing best practice

a. First Year Biology learning and teaching group

b. Cornerstones working group
Community of practice in first year biology

Four first year biology subjects taught over first year
  • common students
  • poor performance
  • conflicting instructions

First Year Biology Group
  • Coordinators, prac coordinators, discipline librarian, student learning
  • developed and implemented an integrated programme of training, practice and assessment of writing skills

The skill of scientific writing was built throughout the year by repeating exercises and increasing complexity over time

The Survival Guide was developed to support this.
Consistent holistic approach to writing assessments across STE

After the success of the Survival Guide in biology it was expanded across the faculty.

To do this agreement had to be sought across disciplines on

- Consistent referencing style and formatting requirements
- Clear and concise aims and objectives
- Transparent marking guides

The 2016 versions is currently being developed as an online interactive resource that sits across the university, covering presentations, group work, learning at uni, etc
Cornerstones working group – Faculty of Science, Tech & Engineering

Purpose

Ensure graduate capabilities are taught & assessed in all degrees

Problem

• GCs ‘getting in the way’ of ‘content’
• How best to build it into the curriculum, in context of subject
• Cost of marking task

Solution

➢ Formation of the FSTE Cornerstone Working Group to provide peer support, sharing of ideas
➢ Spread the development and assessment across core subjects in degrees ...development of ‘core pacs’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Capability</th>
<th>Key Elements</th>
<th>Faculty Graduate Capability Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>➢ Present coherent, concise discussions, explanations, and evaluations supported by evidence and correctly referenced</td>
<td>➢ Communicate effectively, demonstrating engagement with a range of perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>➢ Present an oral explanation, supported by evidence/visual means, correctly referenced and appropriate to an audience, to confidently communicate understanding, critique and/or negotiation</td>
<td>➢ Engage effectively in a diverse range of contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Literacy</td>
<td>➢ Use basic arithmetical calculations and graphic representations to manipulate and interpret data and/or information</td>
<td>➢ Apply relevant mathematical and statistical concepts and methodologies to required tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Literacy</td>
<td>➢ Engage effectively with cultural diversity in scholarly and/or professional contexts as appropriate to the discipline</td>
<td>➢ Be aware of, and committed to, social, cultural, global and environmental responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry /Research</td>
<td>➢ Engage in independent and reflective inquiry and learning</td>
<td>➢ Engage in independent and reflective inquiry and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>➢ Demonstrate intellectual and practical skills needed to identify and use appropriate analytical tools</td>
<td>➢ Collect and collate appropriate experimental and published data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Problem Solving</td>
<td>➢ Identify and describe problems and use conceptual and analytical investigative strategies</td>
<td>➢ Analyse and reason logically from evidence and conceptual ideas and potential new interpretations of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork &amp; Leadership</td>
<td>➢ Work with, manage and lead others in a way that respects diversity and equality and acknowledges individual contributions to the team, the organisation and/or the wider community</td>
<td>➢ Collaborate with colleagues using effective interactions, confident interpersonal skills and team-building activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Behaviour</td>
<td>➢ Have an appreciation for, and respect of, cultural diversity</td>
<td>➢ Respect others, their work, values and ideas in a way that is inclusive of diverse perspectives and contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy &amp; Independence</td>
<td>➢ Demonstrate intellectual curiosity, openmindedness to new ideas, methods and ways of thinking, and respond to new challenges through informed critical thinking and problem solving</td>
<td>➢ Take responsibility for own learning and motivated to self-reflection, evaluation and improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability Skills</td>
<td>➢ Demonstrate a capacity and willingness to evaluate existing understandings to further discipline knowledge, learning and synthesis of new ideas and methodologies</td>
<td>➢ Be able to operate in a culturally diverse and globally oriented society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study &amp; Learning Skills</td>
<td>➢ Use a variety of learning strategies to facilitate independent and lifelong learning</td>
<td>➢ Manage self-directed learning using a range of information sources and tools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduates are expected to have acquired a conceptual, theoretical and practical knowledge of their discipline or field of knowledge with the ability to apply knowledge and skills to a standard appropriate to the requirements of the relevant profession in a changing environment.
Members

- The First Year Coordinator (Chair)
- Subject coordinators or their representative
- Teaching & Learning Curriculum Fellows (BU, BE, AW)
- FSTE-ALLU rep
- Library rep

**Met monthly**

- Develop the FSTE strategy
  (see FSTE Policy & Proc. –Cornerstones & Measurement of GC)
- report on the progress in developing the teaching, assessing & reporting of FGCs
- share best practice & common approaches
Cornerstone subjects

*Introduce & develop* the graduate capabilities

provide *feedback & support*

a ‘*snapshot’* of the students performance

selected tasks

– measure GCs against the Faculty standard

– new or existing assessment
  (essays, lab reports, presentations, exams, etc.)
Core packs (grouped disciplines)

Bundoora
- Life & Chemical Sciences
- Maths & Physical Sciences
- Psychological Sciences (BU, BE, AW)
- Computer Science
- Info Tech (Bu, BE)

Bendigo
- Math, Physical Sciences & Civil Eng
- Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences

Albury Wodonga
- Life & Chemical Sciences

By working within core packs the teaching, assessing & reporting can be shared.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Packs</th>
<th>Cornerstone Subjects</th>
<th>Element Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life &amp; Chemical</td>
<td>BIO1OF</td>
<td>Writing; Inquiry Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>CHE1BAS/GEN</td>
<td>Quant Lit.; Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCI1AIM</td>
<td>Ethical Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths &amp; Physical</td>
<td>MAT1CNS/CPE</td>
<td>Quant lit; Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>PHY1SCA</td>
<td>Writing; Inquiry Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCI1AIM</td>
<td>Ethical Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych. Sciences</td>
<td>PSY1EFP</td>
<td>All FGCs are reported on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PSY1HPM</td>
<td>Ethical Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>CSE1OOF</td>
<td>Creative problem solving; Inquiry Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info Tech (Bu, BE)</td>
<td>CSE1OOF</td>
<td>Quant lit; Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCI1AIM</td>
<td>Creative problem solving; Inquiry Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical Awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summing up

A student centric approach to curriculum review
• requires the holistic approach
• Clear, concise aims & objectives
• Transparent marking guides/rubrics

Staff centric approach
• Communities of practice enable the sharing of ideas & strategies
• A holistic approach can share the burden, enabling a scaffolding and development of GAs across the students degree
Thank you