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Teaching Portfolio

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My Teaching Philosophy

I teach a wide range of undergraduate papers in the Management Communication department, including a first-year paper in writing that is compulsory for WMS students without NCEA Level 3 English, a compulsory first-year communication course that examines diversity issues, a course in communication theory, and third and fourth year optional papers in conflict management, and negotiation and persuasion.

I put a huge amount of myself into my teaching. Certainly, I teach what I know and share the skills that I have, but fundamentally I teach who I am. I believe that if students are to take the risks that are often necessary for deep learning to occur, in addition to enthusiasm for the material that I need to teach, I need to be enthusiastic about my students, and appreciate what they are capable of attaining. For this to happen, I initiate relationship building. I share my personal experiences with students, and tell them about my learning processes: things that I found out the hard way and handy short cuts that make learning easier. I also acknowledge that learning – and teaching – is not just an intellectual activity but one that also engages emotions and values. Students react emotionally to the demands of group work, a daunting written assignment, or challenging feedback. I share with students the challenges that I have faced in my own learning and research journey, and tell them how I feel when faced with complex projects and impending deadlines. Students are often surprised that, although my projects are typically longer, I still face similar challenges. I believe that opening oneself up in that way facilitates students asking questions, persevering in the learning process when they encounter obstacles, and looking for appropriate support.

I think that students deserve a personalised learning experience (Waldeck, 2007), even in large classes, and this is something that I aspire to. I try my best to learn students’ names, and to remember what is going on for them at and outside university. Even in a lecture theatre, students need to feel safe to ask questions, think aloud, and test out propositions and evidence. Students can feel vulnerable admitting that they do not understand a concept or do not agree with an opinion that has been put forward, so I try to look at various ways of addressing an issue to facilitate openness. I also want students to

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* All student comments come from students whose work has already been marked.

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become independent learners, whereby they can decide what questions should be asked, where to find information to investigate these questions further, and are able to evaluate the quality of the evidence. I want them to be able to apply concepts to diverse scenarios, and examine a question from multiple perspectives.

These are quite lofty ideals but I do believe that students are capable of analytical and reflective thinking if we as teaching staff a) teach the skills of analysis and reflection explicitly; b) scaffold the learning task appropriately; and c) provide ongoing feedback and feed-forward. I have found that focusing on skills enables students to “see” what is often a mystifying “in your head” process. The risk of sharing notes, diagrams and jottings on the whiteboard or document camera means that students observe when the logic gets lost, the connection between ideas isn’t clear, or the writing style doesn’t flow. However, the advantage of showing students the process is that students realise mistakes and complexity are normal in learning environments and that there is no one right answer.

In addition to skill development, I believe that scaffolding learning tasks is important (Reigelluth, 1999). The level of support needed depends on the stage that the students are at, and the prior experiences and knowledge that they bring to the classroom. I was taught by extremely capable teachers who had a transmission perspective of teaching and learning, and I still tend to over-explain concepts and examples. Making the shift from a presenter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning (Kember, 1997) has meant that I listen more to the conversations that students have to find out what they know and what they need to know in order to successfully complete a task. Teaching can then unpack concepts and skills when needed, or shift to more complex applications accordingly. I am quite a structured person, so relinquishing some control of the pace of the class has forced me to make choices about what is important to learn within the timeframe of a lecture or tutorial, and what are only interesting but ancillary details. Follow-up resources for remedial purposes and extension are also necessary since the range of abilities within a class requires scaffolds of varied complexity. The final element that I think is fundamental in facilitating higher-level thinking is to focus on formative feedback throughout the learning process. I realised that having a conversation about work in progress changes the power dynamic within a learning situation, and creates a model of partnership.

My research work on collaboration has had quite an impact on my teaching practice in this regard. That is, I have adopted a “communities of practice” model to teaching and learning (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). A community of practice has three elements that tie it together: a) a shared repertoire; b) mutual interaction; and c) joint purpose. Shared repertoire is the common vocabulary/set of skills that all are able to use to describe and discuss issues. This is the role that we have of communicating discipline-specific knowledge and skills to students, so that they can use it within and across courses. Mutual interaction involves the ways in which a group interacts. For me, collaboration is an important way of engaging as a class. Joint purpose means that the whole class as a learning community knows the goals of the course and how these are being achieved.

The community of practice model does not assume that all students will be equally embedded in the learning community. Some students will be highly engaged in a course, while others are only
there because the Management Student Centre has chosen the course for them or the class fits their timetable. At first, I was shocked that some students did not love learning as much I did and I worried that I wasn’t teaching them in such a way that they could learn what I believed they needed to know. On reflection, I realised that my initial concern, while motivated by a desire to help students learn, did not acknowledge that students need to be independent, responsible learners. Now, I focus on my role as a facilitator of learning. My job is to provide support, resources, and a balance of creativity and structure that students can engage with as they wish.

My teaching philosophy can be summed up by the following proverb from Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, the first Māori King: “Kotahi te kōwhao o te ngira, e kuhuna ai te miro mā, to miro pango, te miro whero.” In English, it reads, “There is but one eye of the needle through which the white, black and red threads must pass.” That is, I as the teacher am only one strand in the learning process. Equally important is the energy that the students contribute: their previous and current experiences, their interests and the learning that they engage in throughout the course constitute the second strand. The third strand is the emotional, informational and social support that students need to successfully manage the challenges that they encounter during their time at university. All decisions about design for learning, facilitating student learning, assessing student learning, evaluating learning and teaching, and professional development and leadership evolve in light of this core principle.

**Design for Learning – course design/learning outcomes**

I begin the course design process by considering the skills and knowledge that students need to successfully complete the paper and succeed as they progress further through the degree. Specifically, I consider (a) learning outcomes, which then drive decisions about content; (b) multiple ways of engaging with content to meet diverse students’ learning styles and needs; (c) a teaching approach which combines theory, experiences, and practical applications; and (d) the linkages between learning outcomes, teaching approaches, and assessment.

Before I begin the course design process, I re-read feedback from previous student appraisals, run new ideas past former students, and discuss proposed ideas with the course tutors, who form a key part of the teaching team. Collaboration underpins my teaching philosophy and this aspect of course design means that I continually learn from the examples that students bring to the course, which also keeps me fresh as a learner.

**Learning outcomes link content together**

Given the need to introduce students to discipline-specific knowledge, there is always the danger of overloading the course with too much content. I have adopted a “less is more” paradigm, where I focus on depth rather than breadth in presenting and discussing content, and I encourage the students to “learn to learn” which means that they develop their own ability to find, evaluate and apply knowledge, rather than relying on me as a source of knowledge. I also identify the skills that students need to develop throughout the course, and ensure that these are practised throughout, as I believe learning is more successful when students have multiple opportunities to engage with material, concepts and skills. Key concepts and core skills are synthesised in learning outcomes. The various aspects of the course - lecture materials, class discussions,
tutorial activities, reading materials, on-line activities, practical, experiential activities, and assessments – need to constitute a coherent, integrated learning experience for students (Biggs, 2003). Experiential activities should be reflected on in class and through assessments, and reading materials need to be discussed in lectures and tutorials, for example.

**Multiple ways to engage with content**

However, within this unity, students need to be able to access materials, process information, and represent their knowledge in diverse ways that reflect their strengths and learning styles, and also the skill set that they need as graduates. The second step in my design for learning is selecting teaching and learning approaches that will meet the needs of diverse learners, with differing cultural backgrounds, language abilities, work experiences, and motivations for taking the paper. Student agency is important (Leach, Neutze, & Zepke, 2001), and so I try to offer choices to students about the type of learning experiences and assessments. For example, MCOM331 students could choose a research project or applied practical exercise.

I have experimented with a range of on-line activities to meet the needs of students who find it difficult to attend on-campus classes, or who need more time to engage with materials or give feedback. The staff at the Waikato Centre for e-Learning have been an invaluable source of assistance in this regard. I created Google sites for the first year MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication students in 2010, with the aim that they could share ideas about diversity issues on-line, giving quieter students more chance to have a voice. Several students were very positive about the Google sites in the course appraisals. Students who used the sites engaged in excellent in-depth analysis that far exceeded my expectations, but the sites had not quite been the collaborative space that I had envisioned for two reasons. First, due to the sometimes controversial topics, the entries were a conglomeration of different perspectives, with few connections among them. Second, even though the site was private and only accessible by tutorial group members, some students expressed concern that their views could form part of a permanent digital history. For all of these reasons, I chose to use technology differently in the next iteration. Other e-Learning tools were more successful in achieving learning outcomes, such as staff-student and peer-to-peer Google docs. I have created on-line quizzes for students to learn and practise core vocabulary, and encouraged students to make up their own quizzes in both MCOM104-11A Business Writing and MCOM122-11B Diversity Management and Communication. I have shared technological tools that I found useful with students – http.typewith.me became a firm favourite in group work for the third year students.

At first, I found it odd that I enjoyed using e-Learning so much when personal relationships in the classroom are so important to me in creating connections with students. However, on reflection, I engage more with students personally when I offer chances to connect with ideas in a digital forum. Additionally, e-Learning has different affordances to face-to-face teaching. It allows students to learn at the pace that suits them, and the time and place that they prefer. Students can easily change responses, and re-work initial drafts. I am beginning to see e-Learning as a means to ensure that students connect, create, and can use skills appropriate to the commercial context – all attributes of the Management Communication Department’s graduate profile.
Combining theory, experiences, and practical applications

Another assumption embedded in my teaching and learning philosophy that impacts my course design significantly is that learning is not entirely theoretical. I think this is an important acknowledgement in a university environment that privileges theory. I value experiential learning highly, as sometimes experience can challenge pre-existing conceptual models far more than a set of questions directed to the lecture theatre at large (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2000). How to include experiential elements in large courses is a challenge, but there are many community and corporate organisations as well as university resources available to support this type of learning. For instance, the teaching team from Management Communication worked with staff from the School of Māori and Pacific Development to organise a pōwhiri as part of MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication to enable students to experience and reflect upon an intercultural encounter. The university’s Disability Support Service provided resources to run experiential activities around mobility and vision impairment. Research projects and assessments that allow students to connect with others beyond the classroom and beyond the course are also a way of creating experiential modes of learning. For instance, first year diversity students needed to identify and meet with a research participant of a different cultural background or age bracket. Student responses were overwhelmingly positive. One student noted, “I am grateful for this assignment as I have had the opportunity to extend my knowledge, both on diversity in cultures and life experiences. It is good to be able to apply expert theories to actual experiences, rather than just learning about them in a lecture environment.”

I also build in examples, contexts and questions that will engage students in the coming semester. I am a very creative person. Recently, someone called me an “inveterate scrounger of ideas,” which I thought was an apt label. I am often at a research seminar, scribbling notes on the side about how the data presented could be useful for a class I am teaching, or will teach in the coming semester. I enjoy watching others teach, and I “steal” others’ innovative teaching ideas constantly, adapting them to my own classes and my own style.

I recently completed your MCOM331-11A paper and I just wanted to say a huge thank you. I greatly enjoyed your course and what I have learnt is being put into practice on a daily basis at the moment!! Also due to your course I have been selected from the company to go over to our Head Office in Holland to take part in a course to become a change agent. I will certainly recommend your course to any of our future students! (Lyn, MCOM331-11A)
This lecturer has an outstanding dedication to her students. She is very passionate about the courses that she teaches. Her teaching techniques, both in tutorial classes and in lectures are always innovative and creative. This helps students to better understand what is taught as they are motivated to participate in different activities. (OTA nomination)

I also consider how I can build students in as co-collaborators in the teaching process. Students have a wealth of knowledge and experience that can inform and extend class discussions. For example, many of the students in MCOM331 Managing Conflict and Consensus and MCOM431 Negotiation and Persuasion are mature students. They are managers and community leaders, with years of experience in the workforce, with much to contribute to discussions. This year, in MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication, one of the students with a disability gave the lecture on labelling, stereotyping and representation of persons with disability. Evidently, past students are also a useful ‘resource’ to draw upon, so that students can see how the skills and concepts that we cover in a course all contribute to the graduate profile. This semester, I asked a BCS (Hons.) graduate to speak to my class about the importance of diversity issues in her past and current work experience.

**Linking learning outcomes with assessment**
The final element in planning for effective learning is to ensure that assessment becomes an integral part of the learning experience, and that tasks reinforce the class-based learning. In line with the graduate profile, I include assessments that vary according to format (e.g., video presentation; practical class seminars; written reports; poster presentations) and group size (individual; small or large group).

**Facilitating Learning – student engagement**
Within lectures and tutorials, I use a range of approaches to engage students with content and skills, including class exercises, media analysis, case studies, discussion in pairs and larger group/whole class discussion. Combining these approaches caters for a range of learning styles, and also allows students to teach other as they explain concepts and analyse cases, and also to teach me, by sharing their insights and knowledge about the topic. Each semester, course material needs to be adapted to the particular cohort of students and communication events that are topical and significant. For instance, I used a Google-based survey to find out about the characteristics, prior knowledge and learning styles of the class in my paper MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication, and shared the results with students as an example of diversity that was close to home.

**Relevant examples**
Another strategy that I use to foster student engagement is to use real-world examples and cases from my own research and other colleagues’ current research projects, as well as current issues and topics of discussion. To create “rich environments for active learning” (Dunlap & Grabinger, 1996), I have used data and insights from staff projects on positive ageing, a graduate student’s research project on Generation Y and my own work on volunteering and collaboration to construct real cases for students to analyse. Real examples allow students to apply theories in a more meaningful way. I also encourage them to bring their own examples from the media,
workplace or other organisation to class for discussion. Students have emailed me links to YouTube that tie in with course material.

I want to encourage students to become producers of and contributors to research, rather than consumers, from first year onwards. I offer opportunities to participate in research projects within and outside the university, and to conduct small research projects of their own. This experience allows students to become more reflective of how research is carried out and reported. For example, several first year students from MCOM104 Business Writing emailed journal authors overseas to ask further questions about methodology. I provide extra reading and web links for students who wish to pursue a particular topic further.

**Problem analysis and discussion within lectures**

Lectures and tutorials also need to engage students actively in learning. Recently, I read the quote that “whoever does the work does the learning,” and this reinforced what I aim to do in classes and tutorials. That is, I expect students to problem solve and analyse material actively and feed back to the class in various ways. I have tried several ways of asking students to contribute their ideas, depending on the year level of the students, the size of the group and the “mood” of the class, as well as the nature of the material. Before asking students to feed back verbally, I usually ask them to take a few notes, and chat to one or two other people beforehand. I have found that students often feel more comfortable sharing the small group’s contribution, as it is less frightening than sharing their personal opinions.

I usually start the semester giving guidelines about ‘how’ to contribute and respond. The ‘what’ or the content of the contribution depends on each student. Respect and civility are hallmarks of a collaborative classroom climate. Students have shared very personal situations in class, from their experiences of long-term unemployment to the death of a family member. Empathy is really important at that point, and honouring the honesty of the contribution. More often, students’ comments are more academic and less personal, but this still implies a risk to ‘face’ if they get it ‘wrong.’ The fear
of speaking in public is often named as the greatest fear. I think that it is vital to find what is positive and valuable in each student’s comment, as otherwise the student may never dare to share again. Feedback from my TDU teaching observation noted that “You asked a good open question seeking more feedback, directing questions to different parts of the lecture theatre. It was REALLY encouraging how ready they were to speak out in class.”

If a student contravenes this classroom ethos, I usually speak to him or her privately, outside of the lecture room or tutorial situation. Students are always entitled to their opinions, but I do refer back to the standards of collaboration that are expected. At times, conflict emerges among the members of a small group. I help them discuss options to move forward, but ultimately, the ability to manage team dynamics is a skill that communication students need to take from the degree, into workplaces and the wider community. From the course appraisal data, things that should be maintained included “her stance in getting students to try to problem-solve group issues.”

**Getting involved in tutorials**

Tutorials offer an excellent opportunity to connect with students in smaller groups. I ran one of the first year workshops in *MCOM104 Business Writing* and visited all five of the tutorials over the course of the semester in *MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication*. I also ran all of the tutorials for the third and fourth year classes. Tutorials allow for extended application of theories, more in-depth cases, role plays and scenarios.

What is key is that students are actively involved in making sense of theories and applications, or developing skills. For example, I moved all of the first year writing tutorials to the WMS computer labs, so that students could more easily write and edit their written work. I want students to develop what I call “university literacy” and explain how to use APA referencing, library search tools and academic databases.

I also focus on peer teaching as well as feedback from tutors and from me. When students adopt the approach of “Each one, teach one,” deeper learning often results. I feel most successful when I am no longer needed! Some students struggle at first to see the value of feedback from peers who they do not see as experts in the field. I show them reviewers’ responses to my own research work, to help them realise that every piece of work will get a different response from a different reader/viewer. Next year, I am going to trial PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions) as a peer teaching tool in *MCOM104* so that students can learn within a collaborative, non-teacher directed environment.

**Obtaining ongoing feedback to remain connected**

I frequently collect short written messages from the class about a concept, response to a text or media clip, or concerns about learning. I either share them straight away, or type them up into the next lecture’s PowerPoint for further discussion. I think that keeping communication two-way in lecture theatres is as fundamental as it is in tutorial or small group teaching situations. Hence, I have asked several colleagues in WMS how they keep feeling the pulse of the class. One idea I gained from a WMS Teaching workshop was “Votapedia,” an on-line survey tool where students use their mobile phones to select the response that they think best fits a multiple
It is nice to have a lecturer that reflects the values of the course. I found that Assignment 1 not only helped me learn core concepts of the course, but produced information that I could use in other classes. (Course appraisal feedback, MCOM122-10B)

One of the most helpful TDU workshops that I attended this year was on garnering on-going feedback from students as the course progresses, and I have still to try out some of these strategies. In large lectures, like MCOM104 Business Writing with over 250 students, I would like to trial an agree/disagree card system, so that all students can give quick lecture-wide feedback on an issue. Everyone needs to show a card, which is less threatening than being the one person in the lecture theatre with their hand up. I have also asked students to hand in feedback about one thing they learnt and one thing that they are still confused about.

These are handy techniques, but I realised that I also rely heavily on nonverbal cues from the class to gauge how they feel about the material. I had to use video lectures to teach grammar concepts in MCOM104 Business Writing, since there was no space in the university timetable for an additional lecture for this class. I found it challenging to stand alone in front of an empty lecture theatre, with no feedback mechanisms to check pace, understanding, or interest! I also found it harder to tell jokes as I think that humour comes from what is shared. Half of the students in the course did not like watching the videos on Panopto, and overwhelmingly asked for a face-to-face lecture, with personal connection, and the ability to ask questions. Some students liked the flexibility that the technology gave, so decided that next year I will use Panopto to record the face-to-face lectures. This enables students to re-watch sections that they would like to revise, which is particularly helpful to students for whom English is a second or other language.

**Connecting the learning**
I refer to course learning outcomes frequently, and discuss how the learning outcomes from a particular lecture connect with broader course goals. This
Assessing student learning – assessment practices

I have focused on making assessment practices transparent for students, and ensuring linkages among course assessments. First, I include samples of previous students’ work as exemplars for students as often as possible. For instance, I provided samples of previous reports for students in MCOM331 Managing Conflict and Consensus and MCOM431 Negotiation and Persuasion. I used multiple samples of different types of student writing for the first year Business Writing students. Students appreciated analysing work from previous semesters, which was used with the permission, but sometimes got confused when some aspects of the writing did not align with the principles taught in lectures. That is, I chose to use “real” work rather than “perfect” work that had been academically air-brushed. I will add to this collection of samples, and alter it slightly for next year’s course reader. Specifically, I will annotate each document with track changes, noting what was well done in the student sample, and also what still needed some polishing.

Things to keep: giving clear outlines of what students are to expect in class and of the course. Effective examples used to illustrate and explain things because we can all relate to them in some way. (Course appraisal feedback, MCOM122-10B)

I have also started to use assessment rubrics so that students can see the difference between what is excellent, adequate and insufficient. I used these in MCOM220 Communication Theory and MCOM104 Business Writing in the B semester of 2010. I found that the rubrics were helpful for me, the students, and the tutors. Making an assessment rubric required me to be extremely clear about the learning outcome that I was assessing, and how I would know if students had achieved it or not. The students could see what success looked like, and the rubric showed them precisely where they needed to focus attention in order to improve their grade – use of appropriate concepts, analytical skills, structure or writing. The tutors and I found that our marking was more consistent, and that we had more time to write comments that were specific to each student’s work. My aim for 2012 is to create rubrics that will form part of the course reader before the semester starts, so that students can use the rubrics to analyse and discuss student samples, in tutorials for instance, so that students know how to use the rubrics to their best advantage (Andrade, 2005). While rubrics articulate what the final product should look like, students can also get stuck on the process. As a result, I have started making five minute video podcasts to explain key concepts and skills that students need to successfully complete their assessment tasks.

Thank you very much for the in depth feedback – very much appreciated. I would also like to say that I have enjoyed your class immensely and feel you have such a lovely approachable manner at teaching and guiding students. Thank you for a great semester! (Sarah, MCOM331-11A)
The second aspect that I find important in assessing student learning is to build in small, cumulative assessments that provide on-going feedback, especially at the first year level. For instance, students in MCOM104 Business Writing receive weekly tutorial feedback on their progress in writing and use of different formats, and MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication students share a blog with a member of the teaching team about cultural or age diversity before they write a final reflective report. As one student commented in an email, “This is a really helpful assignment as we get feedback from you during the process of doing the assignment which is super helpful!” This to-and-fro conversation increases students’ ability to integrate the feedback into their next piece of work (Duncan, 2007).

I also try to design the course in such a way that assessment is scaffolded in terms of complexity and builds on knowledge and skills developed in previous assessments. I aim that both my tutors and I offer feedback on assessments that functions as “feed-forward” to what the student can improve or change in the next assessment. This requires connections between assessments, and depends on good course design.

I also noticed that students in their third or fourth year also need feedback early on in their projects. Students in MCOM331 Managing Conflict and Consensus, for instance, had to submit a research proposal before they started collecting data in community organisations. We also had small class workshops about how to write up ethics applications. Groups who chose to run a one hour “facilitated conversation” also attended a coaching session to get feedback on a draft plan.

Once work has been submitted, I try to ensure that feedback is as specific as possible, and tells the student how they can actually improve their work still further. I have had really helpful conversations with students during office hours about how they have implemented feedback.

I have changed some key assessment tasks as the result of dissatisfaction with previous assessments. For example, after teaching MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication in the B semester of 2010, I decided I was not happy with the last assessment task for the course, where students wrote an analytical essay comparing multiple perspectives on a diversity topic. Informal feedback from students during office hours and comments on the paper appraisal forms showed that some students had found the assignment instructions unclear. Fortunately, two weeks after the final exam for MCOM122, I attended one of the communication education sessions at the National Communication Association’s annual convention in San Francisco. I decided that I could adapt one of the “Great Ideas For Teaching Students” (GIFTS) for my class. Students would need to work in groups of three to create a scripted conversation showing three distinct perspectives on a diversity issue, overturning the tendency to adopt binary thinking. Students could present this during an in-class presentation, as a video or an XtraNormal presentation¹. About half of the students chose to present using a more

¹ I was introduced to XtraNormal, an on-line Web-based software, as a possible learning tool during the Tertiary Writing Network conference in Wellington in December, 2010. I believed that offering a range of possible formats contributed to students’ development of one of the six “core competencies” that the Management Communication department expects graduates to develop over the course of their three years of study: “to design: To assess, develop and use a range of communication systems, technologies, and forms of mediated communication.”
traditional in-class presentation, which has made me more aware that the Net generation will not automatically choose to use technology. I also tried to ensure that the course design aligned learning outcomes, teaching strategies and assessment (Biggs, 2003), providing practice in analysing diversity cases throughout the semester, and ensuring students had used technological tools such as Google docs that would facilitate them working together collaboratively on the conversation.

**Evaluating learning and teaching – reflective practice**

My teaching involves ongoing evaluation and assessment of the learning experiences that my students engage in through lectures, tutorials, assessments and course readings as the semester progresses, and the extent to which these experiences contribute to the coherent development of students’ knowledge and skills throughout the course.

Student feedback is vital and needs to be collected from multiple sources. I chat with students individually before and after lectures, and during group work situations within lectures. Other students give feedback about assignments, experiential learning and benefits and difficulties using technology via email, which gives a broader perspective on the learning of the class as a whole. Any time I get more than three emails about the same topic or concept, I discuss the concept with the class in the following lecture.

The class representatives offer feedback during the semester of areas for improvement as well as aspects of the course that facilitate learning. During Study Week, I meet with the tutors on each course, and we create lists of things that worked really well in the course. We also brainstorm all the ways that we would like to change the course, in terms of contact time, course readings, class activities, assessments, and tutorial format. I adopted about half of the changes as workable for the next semester’s course, such as having writing tutorials in the computer labs.

I decided to try this brainstorming activity with the *MCOM331 Managing Conflict and Consensus* students. As the students needed to practise running a facilitated meeting, generating multiple ideas and coming to a group consensus, I thought that gathering their reactions to the course assessments would be an interesting topic. To be honest, I had not expected the discussion to generate so much debate about the role and place of tests in learning. Afterwards, we discussed the alternative assessment possibilities. I decided that several of the suggestions were far better aligned to my overall teaching philosophy: learning journals enable deeper reflection that a test does, and creates a conversation throughout the semester, and the student creation of a teaching video about facilitation would show how students could apply skills in workplace or community settings.

When I took her paper in 2011 A semester, I felt like she went the extra mile for her students. She was very approachable, always cheerful and was good at explaining things. She offered extra tutorials that she took herself. If I had a question I was able to email her or talk after lectures. Her help made it a lot easier for me to pass that paper (MCOM104) with high marks. (OTA nomination)
At the end of the semester, I read through all of the student comments on the appraisal forms to alert me to aspects of the course and my teaching that should be retained and enhanced, and other areas that require further development. I have also collected data about students’ experiences with teaching technology through a focus group, which I used as feedback to improve both my teaching and course design.

I use a digital teaching diary to document my own perspectives on teaching innovations such as new teaching approaches or content that is particularly challenging. I compare my reflections to students’ feedback in deciding whether to extend, maintain, modify or discard a teaching or learning exercise, to ensure that the course remains relevant and interesting.

**Professional development and leadership**

I am fully committed to fostering my full development as a teacher. To this end, I am currently enrolled in the Post-Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching. I have attended not only the TDU courses needed for the PGCert in Tertiary Teaching but also TDU workshops on embedding information literacy into all courses, as well as seminars on e-learning design and integration. I have also participated in all three WMS Teaching Development workshops this year, and am part of a group of staff that will engage in peer observation and feedback on teaching.

I regularly attend workshops run by WCeL and meet with WCeL staff to embed e-learning tools into the learning and teaching of my courses. I usually try to implement one new initiative after each workshop. After the last WCeL workshop, for example, I integrated “Peer Wise,” a collaborative website where students write and provide answers for exam questions, into my exam preparation tutorials. In 2010, I attended an “M-Learning” day organised by the School of Education, in order to consider how students could use mobile phones as a learning tool. I am investigating how on-line quizzes and short podcasts can be downloaded to phones with capacity for video so that students can review core concepts in a quick, accessible format throughout the semester.

In addition to these more formal professional development opportunities, I also appreciate regular informal conversations. I look for both those that specialise in similar areas or have common interests. For example, last year I had a really helpful lunch meeting in Auckland with Kay Hammond, who works in learning development at Unitec about ways to teach students the skills of analytical writing and APA referencing in more effective and creative ways. Caroline Rodler, my subject librarian, gave me the idea of making brief podcasts on academic skills, and helped in my training. The regular meetings with other staff enrolled in the Post-Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching have also given me many ideas and much food for thought. I have benefitted immensely from the teaching conversations that result from team teaching. I have team taught with Rachel Jones on MCOM220 Communication Theory and MCOM431 Negotiation and Persuasion, and Donna Campbell from the School of Māori and Pacific Development on MCOM122 Diversity Management and Communication. Discussions often resulted in more interesting assessments. For example, Rachel and I instituted a visual poster presentation, much like the kind that one sees at academic and practitioner conferences, as one
assessment in MCOM431. I had the opportunity to receive regular feedback on lecture content and style from Donna, who attended the first half of the lectures for MCOM122.

Within the Management Communication department, I am responsible for tutor coordination and provide an orientation before the teaching semester begins. Building on the TDU workshop for tutors from across the university, I organised a second full-day workshop for the tutors, to introduce them to teaching and learning tools specific to Management Communication. We spent half the day looking at assessing and marking writing, in particular, as excellent written communication is a fundamental aspect of our graduate profile. This year, I became a member of the WMS Writing Advisory Group. This has been a fantastic opportunity to liaise with staff across the Management School to implement strategies that will improve students’ confidence and ability to write well and accurately. I have been involved with the trial of a new web-based grammar/writing programme that offers on-line teaching resources as well as opportunities for assessment and feedback, and have developed a student survey to evaluate its effectiveness.

I am also a member of the New Zealand Tertiary Writing Network. I attended the biennial network conference in Wellington last December, and had the opportunity to liaise with educators from around New Zealand and Australia, and share experiences across institutions. I also reviewed papers on pedagogy for and participated in the Australia New Zealand Communication Association conference in July. This year, I have been invited to run a two day workshop on interactive teaching strategies and e-Learning possibilities for teachers of a new post-graduate diploma at Kenvale College, a private tertiary institution specialising in hospitality and event management, in Sydney in November.

**Conclusion**

Teaching has become part of my core identity. I enjoy teaching immensely and love contact with students inside and outside the classroom. I think that enthusiasm does filter through. In response to the statement, “This teacher was enthusiastic about what they were teaching” in the course appraisal forms, I have received scores of 1.0-1.2 across my courses. However, enthusiasm can be a double-edged sword, in the sense that because I love what I am doing, I tend to over-commit. When I see opportunities to improve course design, assessments, or teaching practice, I try everything at once, partly because I believe that the day I stop being a learner, I will stop being a teacher.
Quantitative student evaluations for all classes taught at the Department of Management Communication, University of Waikato

Five point scale. 1= Always, 2= Often, 3= Sometimes, 4= Seldom, 5= Never.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCOM 331-11A: Managing Conflict and Consensus</td>
<td>This paper was intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this paper</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This teacher was good at explaining things</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This teacher was enthusiastic about what they were teaching</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, this teacher was effective</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCOM 431-10B : Negotiation and Persuasion (co-taught)</td>
<td>This paper was intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this paper</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This teacher was good at explaining things</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This teacher was enthusiastic about what they were teaching</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, this teacher was effective</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCOM 122-10B: Diversity Management and Communication (co-taught across faculties)</td>
<td>This paper was intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this paper</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This teacher was good at explaining things</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This teacher was enthusiastic about what they were teaching</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, this teacher was effective</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCOM104-10B Business Writing</td>
<td>This paper was intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this paper</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This teacher was good at explaining things</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This teacher was enthusiastic about what they were teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, this teacher was effective</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCOM220-10A Communication Theory (co-taught)</td>
<td>This paper was intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<td>Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this paper</td>
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<td></td>
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To whom it may concern:

Kirstie McAllum has quickly emerged as one of our most committed, talented and successful teachers. We have given her a huge challenge in teaching two of our most difficult papers--a first year paper focused on business writing and a second year paper focusing on diversity issues. Because of the nature of the content, some students' preconceived ideas about the topics, and the fact that these papers are compulsory for most of the students enrolled in them, there is an obvious set of challenges for any teacher taking these papers. In spite of these challenges, Kirstie has used her creativity, her enthusiasm, and her skill to be highly successful in both. In addition to these papers, she has also convened or lectured on three other papers.

In every case, the teaching evaluations were superb, and students reported to me through the class representative system that she is she is consistently enthusiastic, passionate about her subject, engaging, and that she has a good sense of humour, creates a positive environment for learning, and gets students actively involved.

I especially appreciate her creative innovations in teaching Business Writing. She took that paper over last year and has substantially redesigned it to enhance student engagement and learning.

In short, Kirstie is an outstanding teacher, one we are fortunate to have on staff at the University of Waikato.

Ted Zorn
Chairperson
Management Communication
References


