

Collaborative team teaching - Strategies

Formulate clear teaching team roles and responsibilities

Do you have a clear understanding of:

- What your role in is the teaching team?
- What you are expected to do and by when?
- Who you notify or discuss any teaching issues with?
- Do you know the same for the other members of your teaching team?

Strategies

There are a number of considerations when formulating a teaching plan for your teaching team:

1. **Time fractions** - Consider whether you have sessional, part-time or full-time staff in your teaching team. What time allocation do they have to meet, design, create or facilitate learning and teaching in your course? You need to set realistic expectations that comply with staff employment conditions.
2. **Days/Hours of availability** - Consider what days and hours the staff in your teaching team have available to meet, design, create or facilitate learning and teaching in your course. You need to set realistic expectations that comply with staff employment conditions.
3. **Roles** - What role does the Course Co-ordinator play in this course? A face-to-face or online tutor? Marker? Who is creating online content and when? Who is facilitating online discussions and when? Who do students go too when they have questions? You need to make it clear who is expected to do what role and when.
4. **Areas of expertise** - Do you have staff in your team that have discipline expertise? Or expertise in elements of designing, creating or facilitating innovative learning? Use the strengths of your staff to maximise the learning opportunities of your students.
5. **Areas of development** - Do you have staff that need to upskill in areas of the discipline content? Do you have staff that need to upskill in the use of Moodle, Mahara or other technology tools required for learning? You cannot ask students to do things that your staff cannot. Consider the professional development that your teaching peers need to design, create or facilitate innovative and contemporary online or blended student learning in your course.

Develop effective communication strategies to maximise teaching

The way you communicate as a team is paramount to the effectiveness of your teaching practices. When staff are not in regular contact to plan, implement and review or evaluate teaching practices, the learning experience of students is compromised. And if you are teaching with a team that is across multi-campus or multi-modes, effective communication is essential for **equity in learning**. Consider the following questions for teaching communication in your team:

- How often do your team meet as part of the design process?
- Does everyone get to contribute to the decisions made about assessment, course design and potential learning activities?
- How often do you meet as a team throughout the semester to explore the successes and challenges of teaching?
- What technology tools do you use to facilitate communication channels between team members?
- What process do you employ to support each other in peer review and enhancement processes throughout the semester?

Strategies

Consider the following elements when planning your communication strategy for the semester:

1. **Roles and responsibilities** - You need to have an open conversation to explore the roles and responsibilities of teachers within the team. Don't assume anything. You need to plan who is doing what and when, and supported by whom. And have it documented clearly at the beginning of the semester.
2. **Regular planning meetings** - How often are you meeting as a full team as part of the planning process? Does everyone get to contribute to the decisions made about assessment, course design and potential learning activities? Don't assume anything. Just because you have a sessional staff member, does not mean that their expertise or contributions to the teaching process are any less valuable than the staff member who has worked in academia for 10 years. Everyone has the potential for a valuable contribution to the teaching process.
3. **Regular review meetings** - How often do you meet throughout the semester? Weekly? Monthly? How are you keeping tabs on what is working and what is not? How are you deciding as a team if things need to be altered, or pulled back on track?
4. **Tools to facilitate these meetings** - When the teaching team is spread across campuses, consider the equity of ensuring that all team members have an opportunity to contribute to the teaching process. Campus based staff can fall into the trap of conversing with themselves and not sharing with their peers not visible. Fed Uni has access to a range of technology tools - Adobe Connect, Skype for Business, Video-conferencing - that support staff across campuses and locations communicate effectively to maximise equity in teaching and student learning.
5. **Evidence for peer review and performance reviews** - It is not just the role of line managers to ensure teaching staff have opportunities to improve their teaching preferences. As a teaching team, you are all responsible for supporting each other to provide opportunities to enhance each other's teaching practices through review, support and sharing successes, challenges and ideas for moving forward. As a teaching team, what approaches are you planning to adopt to support each other to facilitate quality teaching practices.

Identify complexities and variable in managing team teaching workflows

When you are working within a team, the day to day teaching and teaching administration workflow can be shared evenly amongst teachers to spread the load and give opportunities to engage, and to step back. Consider the workflow through the learning and teaching cycle of semester, and how you are going to ensure that all teaching responsibilities are allocated and performed in a timely manner.

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The following are just some examples (by no means exhaustive) of workflow considerations:

- **Designing and developing online materials** - Are you collectively going to collaborate on each module, or divide the module development between the teaching team? Or maybe you can collaborate with each module but rotate the lead.
- **Making content 'live'** - Whether you are creating from scratch, or importing from previous courses, who is checking that the links all work, that the group settings are correct, conditional release and activity completion dates have been updated?
- **Virtual office hours allocations** - Consider the process of how students can contact teaching staff and when. You may choose to have a central 'virtual office' of which teaching staff allocate who will be available online - eg: Barry on Monday afternoon's, Dawn on Tuesday mornings, Ella on Wednesday morning and Kevin on Thursday afternoon.

- **Weekly Updates** - Whether it be Monday mornings introducing the week ahead, or Friday afternoons wrapping up the week that was, who is going to ensure that these text, video or audio messages are posted each week?
- **Communication forum allocations** - Consider the same process as with the virtual office hour allocations. You might divvy up the checking of online communication forums day per day, or maybe allocated weeks. eg: Elaine looks after Weeks 1, 4, 7 & 10; Laurie has Weeks 2, 5, 8 & 11 and Shirley has Weeks 3, 6, 9 & 12.
- **Marking allocations** - How is your marking allocation going to work? Do you have access to additional sessional markers, or is it just the teaching team? How are you deciding which staff have how much marking and when? How are you going to allocate which student assessments to which teaching staff? And when will these decisions be made?
- **Moderation processes** - What process of moderation are you undertaking to maintain equity, consistency and fairness of the marking of assessments? When are you doing this and who is going to monitor the process to ensure integrity is maintained?
- **Grade release workflows** - What is the process for the releasing of marks and accessing feedback? Are you going to upload graded work as you go, or upload in bulk at a particular time?
- **Monitoring student engagement** - We explore this further in BOLD Short Course 5, but who is going to collate attendance lists or run activity reports on Moodle to determine engagement at regular times throughout the semester? Who is going to contact the students at risk? Who is responsible for documenting any interventions on fdlGrades?
- **Monitoring teacher engagement** - Who is monitoring the engagement of teaching staff with student learning? Allocating the various workflows is not a 'set-and-forget'.
- **Contingency plans for the unexpected** - What is your Plan B for all of the above. Staff get sick, take leave, fall behind, get reallocated to other projects. You need to have a contingency plan for when things don't quite go to the plan you collectively set.