

Teaching portfolio

Learning and Teaching Philosophy Statement

Every class presents a unique community of learners that varies not only in abilities, but also in learning styles. My role as a teacher is to include all students in learning at their own level, and to inspire the students to push themselves to the next level. I incorporate previous experience and a variety of learning styles into activities to create a student-centred approach and support each learner's development and growth.

I believe the best way to engage a student is to have a range of opportunities for student involvement – exploration, participating in and leading discussion, questioning, presentations and activity based sessions. My aim is to deliver well-planned sessions that are grounded in relevant, purposeful activities designed to enhance that student's knowledge and skills and leave them wanting to learn more. As an effective educator I should be strongly aligned with student-centred and student-directed learning that embraces exploration, discovery, experiential learning, and the production of academically rigorous outcomes.

It is my philosophy that the teacher's role is to guide, providing access to information rather than acting as the primary source of information, so the students' search for knowledge is met as they learn to find answers to their questions. For students to construct knowledge, they need the opportunity to discover for themselves and practice skills in authentic situations. Providing students access to hands-on activities and allowing adequate time and space to use materials that reinforce the themes being studied creates an opportunity for individual discovery and construction of knowledge to occur. For this reason I have embraced the University's philosophy of small-group discovery and included SGDE activities in my 1st year teaching for the past 2 years. I have also found this leads to better involvement and motivation, and hence better retention and application of the knowledge.

In my teaching I believe it is important to further motivate students by allowing them to experience repeated learning success. Students need the opportunity to practice skills in a safe environment. In all sessions I aim to create a supportive and non-judgmental learning environment, and encourage student participation and group interaction. I aim to bring an open mind, a positive attitude, and high expectations to class meetings each day.

I use a range of educational tools in my teaching, and see the potential of technology in education as significant. Technology used appropriately can greatly enhance the students' capacity to learn and the teachers' capacity to teach, inspire, and motivate. The 'flipped classroom' approach to learning and teaching utilises a range of technologies to present new material, and allows students to take more responsibility for their learning, develop critical thinking skills and apply knowledge using higher order thinking. This is an aspect of my teaching I would like to further develop, implement on a larger scale and evaluate.

In order to facilitate learning I involve students in the process of assessment by showing them rubrics for assessment tasks, and giving them opportunities to self-check and self-evaluate. This helps students develop the ability to critique and judge their own accomplishment and to set goals for themselves. I am transparent regarding expected standards, outcomes and assessment. Students also need timely feedback to improve, and it is important to provide both formative and summative feedback. Students are involved in group learning and individual research, and this should be reflected in assessment which includes both individual and group approaches.

Learning is the process whereby knowledge, skills and attitudes are altered or reinforced as a result of the educational experience undertaken. The extent of learning will be different for all learners depending on their individual experiences, expectations and characteristics, and those of the teacher. Other factors such as motivation, context, degree of learner involvement in activities and reflection, the extent of interaction with others and teacher support will influence the learning process. Recognising that learning is interactive and not an isolated individual process is key to successful learning outcomes, and understanding the various aspects involved in the learning process is essential to developing a successful and effective teaching style.

I have over fifteen years' experience in tertiary education, providing a range of high quality and innovative teaching and learning experiences for both undergraduate, academic upgrade and postgraduate students, utilising both internal and external modes. This includes development and facilitation of patient cases for case-based learning, development and delivery of resource sessions (on-line and face to face), tutorials, learning laboratories, small group discovery experiences and clinical demonstration and tutoring, utilising a range of learning technologies.

I have a dental therapy qualification, and have also completed my Bachelor of Adult Education and Bachelor of Science in Dentistry (Honours). I have consistently demonstrated a high level of knowledge and commitment by achieving an award in dental therapy, the Dean's Merit List and First Class Honours and as a member (by invitation) of the International Golden Key Society for high achievement students. I have been an invited speaker at local professional association meetings and presented at a national conference. I am an assessor for the Australian Dental Council (ADC), assessing new and existing programs of study for accreditation and monitoring accredited programs of study, and was recently invited by the ADC to participate in development of scenario-based questions for assessment of overseas trained oral health practitioners.

I believe in lifelong learning and participate in ongoing professional development such as attending the annual HERGA conferences, the University's Festival of Learning and Teaching, and presenting at international conferences. Being a member of the Adelaide Education Academy has provided me with opportunities to grow and develop as an educator on many levels. It has supported me in belonging to a community of practice, connected me with colleagues (locally, nationally and internationally) with expertise in the field of learning and teaching, and provided opportunities for collaboration.

Teaching is also a learning process; learning from students and colleagues. I consider this is a lifelong process where I will learn new strategies, new ideas, and new philosophies. Over time my educational philosophy has changed, and I expect and hope it will continue to change, meaning that I have grown and learned as well.

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