

Preface

The project and this volume have benefitted from the incredible leadership of Professor Judyth Sachs, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost at Macquarie University. Professor Sachs is a champion of learning and teaching, collegial development and the scholarship of teaching. These three themes come together in this volume. Through luck and persistence the volume has managed to attract contributions for some of the thought leaders in these areas, including David Gosling and Mick Healey for Europe; Amy Goodburn and William Buskist from North America; Wendy Kilfoil from South Africa; and, Maureen Bell and David Spencer from Australia.

Each contributor brings a unique set of skills and vastly different perspectives to the volume. But all agree that collegial review could be a powerful force for improving teaching and thereby student learning. Yet for many lecturers the thought of having another person review their teaching is confronting. Clearly it is not review *per se* that is the problem. The academy is built on peer review. We submit journal articles in the full knowledge that someone is going to read them and decide whether they are worth publishing or not. We routinely ask for colleagues to comment on draft papers in the hope of making them better, of improving their quality. But review of teaching is another matter. There are a number of reasons for this. A commonly cited reason is anonymity. Peer review of research is anonymous; peer review of teaching is not. But notice this only applies to the blind review used by journals. It would be pretty atypical to have anonymous developmental review in research. That form of review is between colleagues. A second obvious difference is between what is being reviewed. Review of research is a review of a product; review of teaching is a review of performance. Performance is much closer to the person. Review of the product does not involve people *looking at you*. This distance between you and both the reviewer and the focus of review makes it feel less threatening; makes the reviewed feel less vulnerable. But this only applies if teaching performance is being reviewed. Review of teaching artefacts (assessment tasks, unit outline, online learning activities) is the review of products. A third difference is how confident we are in each domain. Most active researchers would consider themselves reasonably expert within their research field. This is not necessarily the case when it comes to teaching. So you recognise yourself as an expert in research, but you may not feel an expert in teaching. But you should want to become an expert in teaching or at the very

least be committed to improving your teaching. The models of peer review presented in this volume are aimed at allowing you to do just that: improve your teaching. The volume is focused on *improving* the quality of teaching. It is not centrally concerned with the *assurance* of the quality of teaching.

Linking peer review too closely to quality assurance can lead to negative perception about peer review. It may lead to the perception that peer review is about surveillance, an attempt by management to control and monitor staff. Combating this perception is important if you want broad uptake of peer review. Broad uptake from educators demands a model of peer review based on the development of staff, not the monitoring of staff by management. It requires that peer review is placed in a culture of mutual respect, not a culture of managerial control. The culture needs to be an open one in which we're prepared to talk about our teaching, in which we are proud to share our teaching highs but equally unafraid to share our teaching lows in the hope of making us all better teachers.

The point is to make peer review about achievement through unity. It's about all coming together in an attempt to make us all better teachers because we care about our students and we care about our their learning outcomes.

Ultimately we want this volume to improve student-learning outcomes. We want it to make us better teachers; better institutional leaders; better developers of our peers so that all of our students have a better learning experience and learn more effectively.

St Lucia
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