

Inquiry Oriented Learning in Science

Where is the University of New England AFFA Activity at in August 2012? Project Summary and a Reflection on the AFFA initiative

University of New England
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Project Summary August, 2012

Progress

This project, which was an inquiry-orientated practical, is now complete. Student submissions from the practical have been evaluated (marked) and feedback on the Student Survey conducted by Associate Professor Les Kirkup has been received in the form of a spreadsheet. The Focus Group report has not yet been received.

Trial and Assessment

Participants in the trial were student volunteers from the PSIO210 practical class held on May 9 along with some volunteers who completed the practical one week earlier. The survey results are now available and have been carefully perused by the UNE participants.

Who was involved during the development of the activity?

Those who have been involved in the development of the activity are the undergraduate students in PSIO210, technical staff who support the PSIO210 practical classes, UNE staff Nicola King and Julie Roberts and UNE casual demonstrator, Emmanuel Jesuola.

Dissemination plans

We plan to continue on-going collaboration with colleagues such as Kirsten Zimbardi at University of Queensland. We plan to collaborate with Kirsten on a conference presentation and/or journal article to capture the outcomes of the project.

What is next?

We plan to run the inquiry based learning practical again in 2013, incorporating feedback from the student participants in order to improve student learning outcomes. We will then extend the approach to other practicals in PSIO210.

During his visit to UNE, Associate Professor Les Kirkup met with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Professor Jenny Shaw and the Faculty Academic Director, Associate Professor Jennifer Clarke. Both Jenny and Jennifer have given their support to the initiative and Julie Roberts and Nicola King will apply for Faculty funding (either on-off or as part of a funding round) to continue rolling out inquiry-orientated learning across the physiology discipline.

The UNE staff noticed a sense of empowerment of students in being asked for their input and having their opinions heard. This appears to have encouraged them to become more involved in their own learning. There has been a noticeable increase in the level of engagement by students and an increased level of attention during the pre-lab and post-lab discussions.

The AFFA Initiative

The AFFA initiative has been very valuable for us as it gave us the impetus to get started on something that we had been talking about for some time. It also gave us confidence being able to ask Associate Professor Les Kirkup for advice and feedback. Another benefit has been the facilitation of networking with other academics such as Kirsten Zimbardi who are doing similar things at other institutions.