

PRoT - feedback on the review process: Narratives from the reviewee and the reviewers.

Dr. Trina Myers, Dr. Leo Foyle and Paul Kebble

Introduction (Paul Kebble, TLD)

Peer review of teaching (PRoT) will become mandatory for all staff teaching coursework at James Cook University from 1 January 2012.

I wished to be reviewed on

Reviewer 2 (Dr. Leo Foyle): Dr. Trina Myers, lecturer in Information Technology in the School of Business, submitted some of her experiences with Process Orientated Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) during her first year computer science class for review under the new PRoT format.

I was invited to review Dr. Myers teaching by Mr. Paul Kebble of the Teaching and Learning Development Department, JCU and we met on the 13th October for a two-hour session. I am currently engaged in ED5300 Learning and Teaching in Tertiary Education, a Certificate in Tertiary Teaching, being run by TLD.

Apart from Trina Myers, only Paul Kebble and I were present. Following the invitation to attend, Paul gave me a link to the POGIL website to allow me to do some background reading to familiarise myself with the concept. The review session comprised of Trina introducing the finer details of POGIL, and why she chose to explore this method as a teaching option: the idea arose subsequent to a teaching seminar with an invited North American guest speaker the year previous.

Following an informal few minutes of questions and answers, Trina started a presentation showing clips of video files taken from her lectures involving POGIL teaching sessions. Each of five clips was between 5-10 minutes and a DVD with the clips plus two additional (optional) teaching sessions was provided to each reviewer to peruse afterwards if required. The clips showed how Trina introduced the idea of POGIL to her class, and how she organised the groups, the time spent doing so, and how the „answers“ were reported subsequently on the blackboard. During the clips, we progressively saw how students formed into groups more quickly when they became more familiar with the idea and how they took to the process readily. There seemed to be some vibrancy associated with the process which certainly demonstrated student engagement.

At all times, the session was informal and allowed for a free flow of questions, queries and explanations. The video files demonstrated the POGIL sessions reasonably well – but were hindered by a static viewpoint and distance to the blackboard preventing viewing of any opinions written up by the students: qualities that could only be improved upon with a second person filming the session. The static camera prevented us being able to see peripheral interaction with the students around the class but we could hear this occurring and could deduce from the footage reasonably well. Nor were we able to accurately gauge such things as eye contact and student reaction to voice cues and other stimuli around the room. Trina's voice came across well, but the unpractised students were much less clear.

The amount of student interaction and reaction that we did see appeared to be positive and enthusiasm was apparent in most students. Given that Trina had just the one camera to utilise by herself, the recordings were a fair representation of the sessions.

The video files cannot replace being present in the lecture theatre, and they are not appropriate for reviewing all teaching methods. Practically though, one cannot reasonably sit through five lectures to assess the POGIL method. In that respect this review session was a pragmatic way of assessing this particular teaching method and I consider the review session that I attended was worthwhile and of benefit.

Within the context of staff review, it is important for the reviewee to feel comfortable.

Professional, positive, constructive conduct at all times and a relaxed friendly manner is essential (as per JCU Code of Conduct) and within this POGIL review specifically, I feel this was achieved.