

Peer Review Case Study: David Newlyn and Jess Richards

Peer Reviewer	School	Units Reviewed
Jess Richards	School of Business	200999 Sport and Society
David Newlyn	School of Law	200011 Contracts

Mode: Interdisciplinary Peer Review; Online, Primarily Synchronous

Focus: Teaching Approach and Activities; Lesson Content; Student Engagement

Key Topics

- New to online teaching
- Time management
- Student interest and perspective
- Review of recorded sessions

What was your approach?

Jess and David focused primarily on their in class activities. They were unable to attend each other's classes "live" but they were able to share recordings of their classes. They met before and after reviewing each other's recorded classes as recommended, but the having access to recording allowed for greater flexibility with the process.

Jess: "We had a discussion before the peer review took place. We shared with each other that specific week's content, all the engagement questions and activities and the reading associated with that week. We looked at not only the content being delivered and the delivery from the teacher perspective but also how that delivery was being received by the students."

David: "We weren't actually able to attend each other's classes "live," but because we were on Zoom we could record the class and share the recording with each other via DropBox. I don't think there's any need to do it live. In fact, it may be preferably to do it *not* live."

Why did you do it?

Jess and David not only come from different schools but are also at different stages in their teaching experience. This provided for a diverse perspective and sharing of ideas. Both Jess and David were intrinsically motivated to participate in peer review of teaching and take advantage of their diversity to learn from each other through observation and feedback.

Jess: "I wasn't familiar with teaching online. I had never done a class on Zoom. By the time David came in to do peer review it was a bit later on in semester. So I gave myself enough time to learn those processes early on, but I found what I was able to do and through David's insights into my teaching was to better under the classroom dynamic from a student's perspective."

David: “After 30 years’ of teaching it’s very easy to become engrained in your ways. I regard it as a privilege and an honour to go into someone else’s classroom to be able to see what they’re doing. It allows me to reflect on my own teaching.”

What did you learn?

Jess and David both had different but complementary goals for this peer review. Both were focused on their teaching practice, but being new to Zoom, Jess was keen to reflect on her time management and the students’ responsiveness to her activities. In contrast, David wanted a more general approach to his synchronous teaching approach.

Jess: “Specifically, I am going to make an active effort with improving my time management. At times, when the students are in full flight of conversation I worry I am squashing that enthusiasm by moving on to the next topic. However, what this meant was at times some activities and learning was not done in a thorough way. I was however relieved to hear from my reviewer that the group “tasks” I set (creating an infographic, for example) were well received and well executed. I think that is the thing about peer review, it is not always what you can do better but recognising what you are doing well so you know to keep doing that!”

David: “Some of the feedback Jess gave me I want to go back and review. That’s certainly one of the benefits of doing this through the recordings. I can reflect on the feedback at length and review myself through that new lens. I’ve got Jess’s feedback now and the recording, I can actually sit with it.”

What advice would you give to others?

Jess has only engaged in peer review of teaching a couple of times, but clearly sees great benefit in it and is already planning the focus of her next peer review experience. David has more experience in the peer review of teaching space; David recognises that peer review can be daunting for the absolute beginner, and recommends a scaffolded approach to build confidence and experience.

Jess: “Doing it once or twice, you learn to love it! As an ECR (Early Career Research), getting feedback in any capacity is always useful and helpful. Now I want to find someone to come and peer review my vUWS site next semester. That’s the next step for me.”

David: “If you don’t want to be peer reviewed, maybe try peer observation. For people who are new to peer review I think it could be a little daunting. You can build yourself up to a reciprocal peer review, and it’s very rewarding when you get to that level.”