

Peer Review Case Study: Annette Sartor and Rhiannon White

Peer Reviewer	School	Units Reviewed
Annette Sartor	School of Education	101577 Classrooms Without Borders
Rhiannon White	School of Health Sciences	401055 Sport and Exercise Psychology

Mode: Interdisciplinary approach; Online, Synchronous and Asynchronous

Focus: Teaching Approach and Activities; vUWS Site; Lesson Material

Key Topics

- Use of technology
- Student engagement
- Pacing of classroom discussion
- Holistic approach to peer review

What was your approach?

Annette and Rhiannon took ownership of the process and went further in their peer review than was first anticipated. They set out their expectations with mutual respect and a clear mind for the outcomes they both desired.

Rhiannon: “During that first conversation, we realised we wanted a more holistic approach. Look at the learning guide. Look at vUWS. That kind of thing. That worked for us. It may not work for everyone.”

Annette: “Our process was: work together, learn about what each other is doing with our units, explore the vUWS, observe a lesson. It’s not just about that one lesson. It’s about the whole unit... we looked at everything we were doing on vUWS.”

Why did you do it?

Coming from different Schools and different disciplines was seen as highly beneficial to the process. There was some commonality to their teaching, as Rhiannon and Annette commented on in our post-review debrief:

Rhiannon: “we’re from different schools and different fields but because I’m in Health Science but in physical education and Annette is in Education we had different backgrounds and very different ways of teaching and we taught different types of content there was like a small piece of commonality between us.”

Annette: “The fact that we were both teaching education students is like we were both thinking about preparing our students to become teachers. We both had the same goal for our students.”

What did you learn?

Annette and Rhiannon exchanged learning guides, other unit materials, and access to each other’s vUWS sites in preparation for the online observation of teaching, which took place in Week 10. They reviewed each other’s materials and explored each other’s vUWS sites thoroughly. Both reported benefiting from reviewing and being reviewed.

When prompted to reflect on what they had learned from the peer review process, Annette and Rhiannon offered the following in their reports:

Rhiannon: “I learnt that different teaching approaches suit different cohorts of students and different topic areas, and that there are a variety of ways of engaging students. I also learnt that while some classes are fast-paced and involve variety, there is value in simple and slower paced lessons that provide room for discussing content in depth.”

Rhiannon: “I learnt that engagement doesn’t necessarily mean verbal communication and input within a class, and that there are different ways of students engaging, and also different methods of encouraging student engagement, and that student engagement cannot be assessed or monitored via one method only.”

Annette: “Feedback on the types of activities that provided opportunities for student engagement encouraged me to feel confident that I was providing an effective online learning experience. However, I also discovered that there are many ways to engage students including interactive activities via Google Classroom. Having a visual presence through the recording of online lectures and speaking to students in short videos to have more teacher presence on the vUWS site are strategies I will be implementing.”

Annette: “I liked the pace Rhiannon used in her online tutorials, as I felt it had the potential for keeping more students interested in the tutorials rather than disengaging. I will consider improving the pace of my tutorials in relation to the particular group of students.”

What advice would you give to others?

At the end of the peer review report templates, Annette and Rhiannon were asked what advice they would give to colleagues who are contemplating participating in the peer review process?

Annette: “Go on the journey together and view it as a way of sharing ideas rather than evaluating each other. Provide constructive feedback and support each other.”

Rhiannon: “Approaching peer review for the purpose of sharing ideas where colleagues are both interested in discussing teaching practice, rather than simply as an evaluative task where peers are expected to perform, makes the process more comfortable and more useful.”

They also both emphasised the importance of context of your peer’s teaching context, the unit, the vUWS site, the student cohort.

Rhiannon: “Review your partner’s teaching in all that it encompasses, as opposed to merely observing the performance or practice.”

Annette: “Examine the whole learning experience, rather than just observing one online class. Give your buddy access to your vUWS site and explain what you do (all elements of the experience) and why you do it that way.”