

Levels of Reflection: annotated with key criteria

See video presentation: https://mediahub.qut.edu.au/media/t/0_hz2wjniz

Mostly Recall

In the leadup to the commencement of semester, most of my time was spent setting up teaching materials in Canvas. Canvas is the new learning management system (LMS) at QUT. It has a much better user interface than blackboard, and it has a different way of handling content. I'm not sure if it is better, but it is quite different. This meant, that there was a learning curve in getting to know the new system.

The university organised for the unit content from Blackboard to be copied into Canvas, and also there were workshops for staff to help them get to know the new system. I went to a couple of these workshops, but they were mostly about knowing how to do things with the new interface, which I didn't find too difficult.

The problem for me, was that most of my class materials were not in a lecture-tutorial Powerpoint slide format, and it was this format that the new Faculty templates were setup for. Therefore, it was time consuming to work through a new template and a new system and try and work out how to adapt my unit to suit both.

Also, Canvas has a completely different way of managing assessment. I spent a lot of time adapting my previous assessment to fit nicely with the Canvas way of doing things. While I was generally pleased with how this ended up, I'm sure it is going to need finessing once I see how it works for the students.

Next semester I need to do the same process for a different unit, but hopefully it should be a little easier now that I have done this one. I think it will take a couple of iterations of the units before I am happy with everything.

Learning Potential

Personal Challenges

Significant Experiences

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Three Stories

In the leadup to the commencement of semester, most of my time was spent setting up teaching materials in Canvas, the new QUT learning management system. I found there was quite a steep learning curve in getting to know the new system. I attended workshops that the university ran for staff, but mostly I found them to be focused on the new interface, which I didn't find too difficult.

My biggest challenge was that most of my class materials were not in a format appropriate to the new faculty Canvas template. Therefore, it was time consuming to work through a new template and a new system and try and work out how to adapt my unit to suit both.

It was frustrating having to spend so much time adapting my previous assessment to fit nicely with the Canvas way of doing things. While I was generally pleased with how this ended up, I'm sure it is going to need more finessing once I see how it works for the students, and this will no doubt take more time and continue the frustration.

Next semester I will need to do the same process for a different unit, and there are some things I could probably do differently to make the process easier. For a start, I know now how to approach the new structure and I'm confident that I can adapt new content to work within the new structure. Planning this out before starting the process in Canvas will probably help. I also plan to unify some aspects and make them consistent across both units. Keeping the consistency not only makes it easy for me in making the changes, it should also make the units easier for tutors and also for students – particularly those moving from undergrad to post grad. Finally, I need to block out some time to do specific subtasks so that the whole process does not become over-whelming. Attending to these things will probably help, although I think it will take a couple of iterations of the units before I am completely happy with everything.

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A reflective narrative with 3 threads

In the leadup to the commencement of semester, most of my time was spent setting up teaching materials in Canvas, the new QUT learning management system. This was frustrating, as there was quite a steep learning curve in getting to know the new system, and I really hadn't created a plan at the start which might help guide me through the process. I attended workshops that the university ran for staff, but mostly I found them to be focused on the new interface, which didn't really address my main problem: how to transform my materials into a format compatible with the new faculty Canvas template. A considerable amount of time was spent trying to get a handle on the huge amount of content that was copied from blackboard. To help staff, this copy of previous content was done automatically, and while this probably helped with units that were mostly powerpoint slides and lecture and tutorial materials, this was not helpful for me as much of my content resided in Jupyter notebooks. At the time, I did not realise that I was focusing on structural issues rather than on the main unit content. This is something that I can change for the same process next semester. I should be able to make this process easier by separating the content from the structural form of the unit, and plan sub-tasks for both. I intend to try this for next semester.

Another significant frustration was the need to adapt my previous assessment to fit nicely with the Canvas way of doing things. I wasn't expecting to have to change my assessment at all, but in the end, I made quite a few changes to help the assessment fit into the new style. This was time consuming and annoying at the time, but ultimately I'm glad that I committed to doing it rather than putting it off. A downside of this is that the changes meant that quite a lot of previous video material was now subtly different, and really needed re-recording during the unit – something that I was hoping to avoid. This cascade of changes nearly drove me crazy in the early part of the unit, but now that I'm aware of it, I can plan to minimise it next semester. I also plan to do this by focusing on unifying the main aspects of the unit and drawing heavily on what I have done this semester. Keeping the consistency not only makes it easy for me in making the changes, it should also make the units easier for tutors and also for students – particularly those moving from undergrad to post grad.

Despite being a very frustrating period, I can certainly treat these challenges as learning experiences. This won't be the last time that significant change is forced upon me, so I need to take advantage of what I have learnt in future. In particular, it will probably help to spend time at the beginning of a challenge to identify the difference between structural and content tasks, and plan processes for dealing with both effectively.

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