

Lecturing in First Year Functional Anatomy: New initiatives to improve student engagement

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Abstract

Traditionally Functional Anatomy is a content heavy subject that often leaves students feeling overwhelmed and disassociated from the material. With a shift in contemporary patterns of transition from adolescence to adulthood (Wyn, 2004), there is an increasing need to deliver unit material in a way that allows students to both relate to the material in a meaningful way and equip them with the necessary skills to apply that knowledge in different contexts out in the workplace. The current paper presents a number of new initiatives to improve student engagement in first year functional anatomy following a reflective practice exercise that sought to align current teaching practices with the five key elements for excellence in teaching, and the principles of learning which guide pedagogy.

Background

As an early career academic, embarking on a career in teaching and learning alongside ones research pursuits can be a daunting experience. Thus while learning to teach in higher education, it is beneficial to identify your teaching perspectives (Pratt, Collins, & Selinger, 2001) and assess whether your beliefs, intentions and actions are aligned. To date five different perspectives on teaching have been categorically identified: Transmission, Apprenticeship, Developmental, Nurturing, and Social Reform (Pratt et al, 1998). These teaching perspectives “determine our roles and idealised self-images as teachers as well as [form] the basis of reflecting on practice” (Pratt et al, 1998, p.10). Furthermore, Kane and colleagues (2004) suggested that purposeful reflective practice represents a medium by which early career academics may enhance their development and understanding of teaching excellence in higher education. Therefore the aim of the current submission is to present a number of new teaching initiatives to improve student engagement in a large (+600 students) first year anatomy unit. These initiatives were the result of engaging in reflective practice after teaching the unit for the first time, with the goal to identify how the material might better be delivered to achieve the personal teaching and learning goals of: 1) What can I do better to engage my students? 2) How can I make my lectures more effective? 3) What can I do to help facilitate active learning during my lectures?

References

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