

28/08/16 - DO LESS CREDITS AND GO DEEPER WITH LEARNING.

Self reflection By Mitchell Howard

WHY HAVE I IDENTIFIED THIS AS AN IMPORTANT FOCUS FOR ME?

Having taught the Level 3 Mathematics and Statistics course at StAC. I have been really surprised by the low level of engagement and knowledge retained from previous years.

I know also that there is an issue with students choosing not to prepare for both external exams in L3 Statistics yet when they go to university they struggle through Statistics courses that require this knowledge. We have had about 8 former students coming back for extra help this year with one of our statistics teachers. Many students find themselves in courses that require L3 Statistics and they are simply not prepared.

A thing I heard about prior to coming to StAC was that it was "up-side down" meaning that Junior students work really hard and by the time they get to Yr 13 they become really slack. Why is this? Is it because:

The students are so busy with extra curricula opportunist such sports, music, drama etc. What about Social life and part time jobs?

Are the students just over the game of NCEA being smashed by internal after internal in search of more and more credits?

Is it because Maths is their 5th subject and they care very little about it.

Currently it appears that for every internal I hear about in Mathematics( I need data on this) there are quite a number of students from each class who are getting a re-sub (further evidence) or just doing a re-assessment. Both of these activities take time and effort on the part of teachers and the students. Teachers need to chase up and meet with students one on one for the further evidence. Alternatively students are directed to sit another assessment which is supervised out of class time and the teacher might need to spend time working one on one to give feedback and help preparing the student for the re assessment.

From the students perspective, for many of them it's like they 'have a crack' at the assessment, even if they have not quite prepared properly for it. If you are lucky you might get a chance for further evidence where you get a chance try to work out from the teachers 'prompting' what 'trick' they haven't performed or bit they haven't completed or explained clearly. I've had students say to me 'you're a bit tight sir, usually we get a bit more help' (or words to that effect and on more than one occasion) in these situations. If a student does not get the further evidence, they just 'do the resit'. The Real assessment is like a practice that they get feedback on so that they can do the re-sit opportunity.

The effect of this process is that it is creating a lot of messy running around and potentially unfair practices. It could be suggested that the re-sub or further evidence creates a situation where a student can charm a teacher into giving them big enough hints that when viewed objectively this could be considered cheating.

Why would a teacher do this? According to one staff member's perception, the reason for this is because 'we are judged by our failures and not given credit for successes'

So it is my feeling is that students are currently getting their feedback from the actual assessment and then taking this forward into the resit. Moving forward my recommendation is that all students be given an official 'Practice task' which is marked by the teachers and given back with feedback as to what the

It can also be used to clarify what is required for the different levels of achievement.

The argument against this is that students already do plenty of practice assessments and those students who get the desired result on the practice paper why should they have to sit another paper?

WHAT STEPS AM I GOING TO TAKE TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL AND WHY HAVE I IDENTIFIED THESE AS MY FIRST STEPS?

Reduce the number of credits in the courses (L2 and L3 Statistics in particular)

Get courses to have official practice tasks for assessments. So students get proper feedback prior to an assessment as well as be quite clear about what is required for particular levels of achievement.

Perhaps get rid of the Resubs and re sits

HOW IS THIS GOAL GOING TO CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES?

It will reduce the number of credits that are available in the course but it may also reduce the number of SNA's in the course.

Perhaps the levels of achievement will not be as high but it may actually be more fair representation of the results of St Andrews's students.

WHO MAY I NEED SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE FROM AND WHAT MIGHT THAT LOOK LIKE AS I LOOK AHEAD TO ACHIEVING SUCCESS?

Other HOD's at Stac to see what processes they currently use for re submissions and numbers of credits.

Personal goals this relates to:  
Review Mathematics Pedagogy at St Andrew's,  
Too many credits no practice assessments.

Criteria this relates to:  
11 - Analyse and appropriately use assessment information, which has been gathered formally and informally,  
12 - Use critical inquiry and problem-solving effectively in their professional practice,  
1 - Autonomy - to treat people with rights that are to be honoured and defended

1 COMMENT

*Helaina Coote said:*

This is a really interesting reflection, Mitch, one that outlines an observation (problem) and some hunches about why those things (disengagement / credit harvesting at the expense of learning) are happening. What's interesting is that you move from factors such as over-commitment to co-curricular to factors within

your control as a leader. This is the template for teaching as inquiry.

Interestingly, we as an English department 'did away' with resubmissions this year (we allow one for creative writing only). We were fearful students would fail, but in fact, they have been fine. One strategy we put in place was the opportunity for some formal feedback on progress in the assessment prior to hand-in. It seems to have worked!

- 29/08/2016