

Coordinators Leading Advancement of Sessional Staff (CLASS) Project

Exemplars of Good Practice Initiatives

TUTORS' MANUAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATION UNIT, MURDOCH

EXEMPLAR: TUTORS MANUAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATION UNIT

Title:	Interdisciplinary foundation unit – Tutors Manual
University :	Murdoch University
Discipline Area:	Interdisciplinary
Subject/Unit Coordinator (optional)	Dr Carol Lacroix, Lecturer, Environmental Science with co- coordination from School of Social Science.
Level of Unit	Year 1
Number of Students:	250 – 300 students per study period at Murdoch University, plus Open University class (around 100 students)
Number of Sessional Staff	6 tutors in Murdoch offering, 1-2 tutors in OUA offering
Delivery Mode:	Face to face and online

Profile: Tutors are drawn from a range of disciplines from across the university and range from novice to experienced tutors.

Background/Context: Interdisciplinary foundation units are designed to introduce students to a range of skills and academic ideas. Tutors are drawn from a range of disciplines from across the university, so there are significant differences in expertise and teaching methodologies. Students are drawn from a range of disciplines across the university, so there are differences in experiences of teaching methodologies and subject matter.

The aim of the Tutors Manual is to provide guidance for tutors and to facilitate consistency of teaching within the unit.

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Good Practice Initiative:

Tutors Manual:

Course coordinator develops a Tutors Manual (we use a format similar to the Unit Guide) that incorporates:

- Detailed lesson plans for each tutorial, with activities, approximate time frames, reminders for students etc;
- Activity sheets for students, with supporting information for tutors;
- Reference material for tutors (for example on academic tone, non-discriminatory language, guidelines for evaluating tutorial participation, important contacts; information on downloading assignments for marking);
- Material for overheads, including overhead transparency sheets.

Tips for Implementation:

Distribute hard copies of the manual at start of teaching period. As a unit coordinator, take the Tutors' Manual to tutors meetings. At these meetings, review forthcoming lessons plans, welcome feedback and ideas from tutors about what did or did not work in recent tutorials, and make notes regarding changes for next teaching period.

Whilst it should be clear to tutors that they should follow the lesson plans provided, it should be acknowledged that the lesson plan framework is flexible because tutors may need to adapt the schedule of activities to suit particular groups of students.

Update the tutors' manual at the beginning of each study period, in line with any changes to the unit and with feedback gathered from tutors.

Evaluation:

Feedback from tutors has been positive. Most tutors, and especially those tutoring in the unit for the first time, like being provided with lesson plans for guidance rather than having to develop these themselves. All tutors enjoyed having an opportunity for feedback and incorporation of their ideas.

For co-coordinators, the Manual is a useful tool for co-coordinators in clarifying their expectations of tutorials before the teaching period begins and thus provide a consistency.

Reflection:

The Tutors Manual has been a useful practice in an attempt to facilitate consistency of teaching. Understood as a process for guiding tutors and adapting teaching practiced based on tutors' experiences of teaching the material, the Tutors' Manual has provided a means of establishing rapport between coordinators and tutoring staff, whilst allowing coordinators to practice effective leadership.
