

# **Peer review of learning designs for strategic compliance and professional development: Benefits and challenges for the university and reviewers**

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This showcase will describe a process of peer review of subject (unit) learning designs aimed at assuring compliance with a comprehensive new university learning and teaching strategy. The strategy aimed at reshaping students' learning experience, enabling them to develop graduate attributes through effective blends of online learning and face-to-face collaborative learning in new learning spaces, authentic assessment and effective feedback. Peer review was chosen as a collegial process that could serve the needs of both compliance and academic professional development. A cross-discipline approach was designed to increase review independence and enable reviewers to experience different disciplinary practices. Criteria related to the university strategy's aims were developed and publicised. Each faculty nominated subjects to be reviewed and peer reviewers, with 239 subjects and almost 50 reviewers nominated. Reviewers participated in two interactive professional development workshops. These included practice reviews using SPARKPlus, with benchmarking followed by discussions aimed at calibrating judgements and clarifying understandings. Each reviewer then reviewed several outlines, rating them for compliance and providing feedback. Reviews with ratings of non-compliant or unclear were moderated by the academic development team. Data was collected and analysed in several ways. The peer reviews were analysed to identify the aspects most often rated as 'unclear' or 'non-compliant'. Ratings and comments were compared with moderator judgements. Data was collected from reviewers at a debriefing workshop, through an online survey and through short interviews with a sample of reviewers. Grounded thematic analyses were used to identify key benefits and improvements for the process, and personal benefits and challenges for reviewers. The peer review process was largely effective, with 65% of subject outlines initially rated as compliant and a high level of agreement between reviewers and moderators. Most reviewers were able to interpret how the criteria applied to outlines from other disciplines, but discerning the authenticity of assessment proved challenging for some. Reviewers valued the opportunity to see others' subject outlines, and many noted that the experience of reviewing had made them aware of aspects of their own subjects that could be improved. However, some tensions were noted between the compliance aims and the formative aspects of the process. These outcomes will be explored in more depth in the showcase.