

Six years of teaching human bioscience,
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Six Years of Teaching Human Bioscience, Pathophysiology and Pharmacology: A Journey of Reflective Practice

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Abstract

Science classes for health science degrees are some of the most challenging any lecturer will undertake. In many institutions they act as the 'gate-keeper' subjects for the degrees they serve and are often deemed the reasons for high attrition and fail rates.

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This paper focuses on a suite of four biomedical science courses that run over the first two years of various healthcare degrees at Charles Sturt University. The majority of our regional students are enrolled in nursing or paramedic undergraduate degrees and have entered through non-traditional pathways. Students study these courses either internally on campus or via distance education with many moving between modes of delivery. In an attempt to improve student performance we set out to realign the course content and assessments of these key subjects using Bloom's taxonomy.

A review is presented of the teaching teams' experiences and responses to the challenges in teaching human bioscience, pathophysiology and pharmacology. The review considers the data generated over 12 semesters of teaching between 2007 and 2012 inclusive and assesses the impact of the content realignment. It includes the trends in student subject evaluations and historical data relating to student success, attrition and failure. Although student opinion towards these subjects has in general improved, the review highlighted problems associated with analysis of trends over time when centralised raw data is unavailable. Despite this limitation, it has enabled the team to identify where future efforts need to be directed; the student transition from level 1 to level 2.

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