

Associate Fellow: course design

AT3: You recognise a range of EAP syllabus or course types.

AA1: You articulate the difference between assessment of, as, and for learning.

Syllabus and course design is difficult to evidence for an Associate Fellow application if the EAP teacher is employed mainly on Foundation or Pre-sessional English (PSE) programmes with highly prescribed content. There is little opportunity for a teacher to have input into course design. An innovative approach from an applicant who had worked on PSE programmes at two different universities was to analyse the syllabuses in order to demonstrate their understanding of the underlying principles and how these led to different approaches to teaching and feedback.

Feedback from the assessor:

The comparison of the different syllabuses at the Universities of (X) and (Y) demonstrates your ability to analyse and evaluate different approaches to EAP.

Your peer observation and evidence of giving feedback on learning development goals as well as feedback on assignments demonstrates your understanding of assessment processes.

GAPS: You mention constructive alignment but it is not clear from the evidence you provide that in practice you link learning aims and class content to assessment.

You tend to offer as evidence documents created by the course directors at the institutions where you have worked. This does not show your competence in creating or adapting materials for teaching & assessment.

Evidence provided by the candidate

Study the extract below from the Reflective Account of Professional Practice submitted by this candidate.

What evidence does the candidate provide for the analysis of the two syllabuses?

What conclusions does the candidate draw from the analysis about how to approach feedback?

Are there any points where additional support from published sources would strengthen the analysis?

What values is the candidate demonstrating in this extract?

How could the candidate address the gaps identified by the assessor?

Extract from an Associate Fellow Reflective Account of Professional Practice

The PS at the UoX adopts a flipped learning approach to promote learner autonomy. [...] there is a strong emphasis on research skills through a reading into writing process, where students need to critically synthesize and evaluate generic academic texts first (CR), followed by a critical review essay requiring students to select and evaluate three disciplinary academic articles (CR). As both written and spoken work contributes to students' final grades, teachers need to provide detailed feedback on students' first drafts and concise feedback on their final submissions along with marks. [...]

The PS at the UoY also adopts a flipped learning approach but aims to improve learner autonomy and critical thinking through reflection and peer collaboration. [...] to achieve these aims, students set personal learning development goals (LDGs) from Week 1, complete their weekly Learning Development Portfolio (LDP) reflecting on their weekly progress [...]. Teachers give weekly formative feedback on their LDPs focusing on development. Additionally, students also receive feedback from peers and teachers during synchronous sessions, which can be further categorised into two strands. One strand involves language and organisation, which emphasises genre analysis of academic spoken and written texts underpinned by a social and cognitive genre approach (Bruce, 2015). The other parallel strand involves problem-based learning (PBL) group work, which requires students to apply EAP knowledge and skills to the analysis of a real-world problem based on one UN sustainable goal, for which they receive peer and teacher feedback throughout the process.

The overview above shows similarities between the two syllabi at the UoX and UoY. Both emphasise transferable skills while developing PS students' EAP knowledge and skills, and both highlight the centrality of teacher feedback. However, the fundamental difference in the syllabus design also necessitates variations in teacher feedback.

Syllabi can be categorised into two types—Type A and Type B (White & Robinson, 1995). Type A focuses on the content of learning, which entails that the teacher defines the content of instruction and assesses students based on their mastery of the content. By contrast, Type B stresses the process of learning, where the teacher and the students negotiate the content based on the ongoing student needs, and students evaluate their own learning based on their own criteria (Whyte, 2018). The UoX syllabus appears to be more of Type A than Type B. This is because, despite the formative assessments at various stages, these tend to complete with summative assessments targeting at assessing students' mastery of their learning. Thus, by emphasising assessment of learning and for learning, this Type A syllabus views the teacher as the authority, whose feedback should be directing students towards successful completion of each task.

The UoY syllabus, by contrast, strongly features Type B in that it gives students the choice of evaluating their own progress through reflection, a process achieved through collaborations with peers and the teacher. Hence, by emphasising assessment as learning, and for learning, this Type B syllabus necessitates feedback on the learning process and self-regulation (for example, strategy use), which Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue to be more effective than on the task. Indeed, the authors believe that “too much feedback only at the task level may encourage students to focus on the immediate goal and not the strategies to attain the goal” (p.91). Accordingly, teacher feedback on task alone is less likely to foster critical thinking, which is crucial for students' academic success (AP2; AA1; AA2;

Suggested responses

What evidence does the candidate provide for the analysis of the two syllabuses?

Relates the analysis to a framework for comparing syllabuses with a reference (White & Robinson, 1995). Briefly summarises the two syllabuses and assessments and identifies differences in syllabus design based on this framework: task-oriented or process-oriented.

What conclusions does the candidate draw from the analysis about how to approach feedback?

Teacher as authority giving feedback on task completion (assessment of learning) vs teacher as facilitator giving feedback on process and strategy use (as and for learning)

Are there any points where additional support from published sources would strengthen the analysis?

TEAP handbook (page 12) provides an overview of as, for and of learning with references, which the candidate could have used.

What values is the candidate demonstrating in this extract?

The analysis of the syllabuses on the basis of published literature, with the conclusion that each syllabus requires a different feedback style shows the candidate's professionalism and commitment to evidence-based practice.

How could the candidate address the gaps identified by the assessor?

Constructive alignment at this level can be shown in a lesson plan where a rationale for choice of materials and tasks is related to learning outcomes, assessment and students' future study.

Make sure documents provided as evidence are ones where the candidate has made changes or had some input to the design or evaluation of a syllabus or materials.

Notes from the assessor

This was a strong application with some aspects, for example knowledge of the literature and ability to analyse the syllabuses, showing a high level of professional insight. In this respect, the candidate was already at Fellow level. Associate Fellows are still expected to reference the literature to validate their practice and provide rationales for the choices they make, for example in departing from a prescribed lesson.