Teaching Rubrics: An Action Research Project at ACU Melbourne

UECA: PD Fest 2016 Adelaide

ACU International

Presenters: Stuart Parker & Gus Wong

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1. Motivation - Stuart

The problem:

- Students who score poorly in an assessment often either do not understand or do not accept what went wrong.

- This is a problem across universities but is likely even more pronounced for international students.

1. Motivation - Stuart

The players:

- As teachers, we tend to view ourselves as definitive sources of information and think in terms of universal rules and transferable skills

- Do students perceive teachers as being islands independent from one other?

1. Motivation - Stuart

The solution:

- We need to train students not only to see what we see as teachers in terms of assessable features but also to place an equivalent value on them.

- Establishing an engagement with the primary assessment tool, the rubric, is undoubtedly a rich source in achieving this.

1. Introductions

The Action Research Project

When: All through 2016

Classes: EAP 10 week courses

No. of Students: 7/~20/~40

Target AT: Compare / Contrast in-class essay

1. Introductions

Assessment Task Description:

- Write a compare & contrast essay on ideas from 4 articles (300 words)

- Articles provided

- Annotation in groups

- Practice assessment (A Big or Small Australia)

- Final assessment (To use or not use Nuclear Energy in Australia)
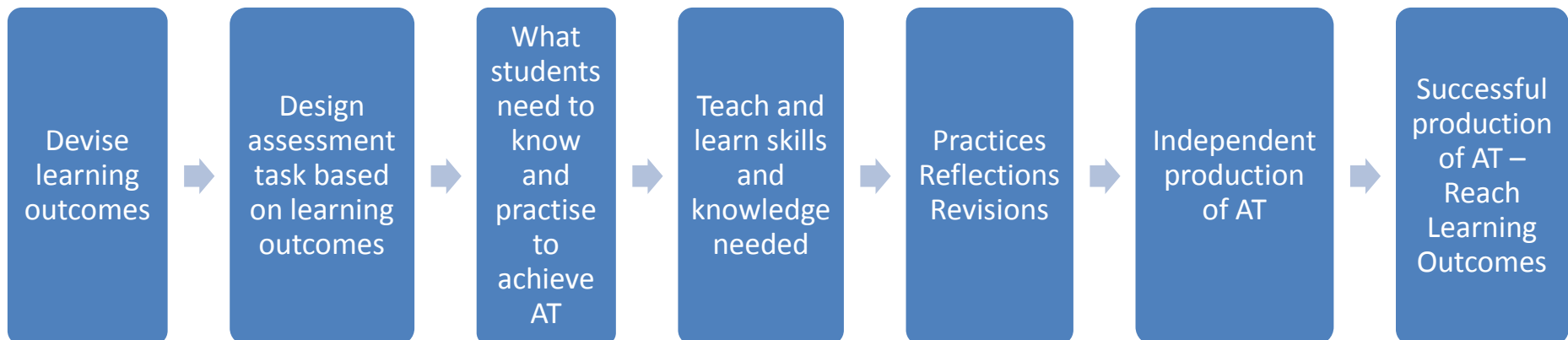
1. Motivations - Gus

- Teaching rubric already part of the workshops

Students:	Still lacked conceptual link between what was stated in the rubric and what they actually produced	Q1: How do I build/strengthen this conceptual link between what is stated in the rubric and what students actually produce?
Teacher:	I had taught students everything but did they know they had been taught everything they needed?	Q2: How do I build/strengthen the link between the discrete learning and teaching activities and the assessment task?

2. What Did We Do Differently?

- Constructive Alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011)
- Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)
- Backward engineering design models
- Teachers identify the desired results and then work backwards to identify acceptable evidence and then to plan the learning experiences desired through carefully planned and implemented scaffolding

Devise learning outcomes → Design assessment task based on learning outcomes → What students need to know and practise to achieve AT → Teach and learn skills and knowledge needed → Practices Reflections Revisions → Independent production of AT → Successful production of AT – Reach Learning Outcomes

2. What Did We Do Differently?

2.1. Exploring the rubric in some greater depth

2.2. Build a portfolio of teaching materials

2.3. In-class moderation

2. What Did We Do Differently?

2.1. Exploring the rubric in some greater depth

Aim: Foster in-depth understanding of task/alignment between expectations

Appendix 2: Assessment Task 2   Major Task - Marking Criteria

	5-4	3-2	1-0	Your Score	Comments
Group Work	Worked very well as part of a group.	Worked well as part of a group.	Did not work well as part of a group.	Not marked	
Essay Planning	A detailed plan provides evidence of well thought out planning of the essay.	A plan is provided, but it may not be clear or well thought out.	No plan is provided, or it is unclear or poorly thought out.		
General understanding of the essay question and texts and critical analysis of texts.	All aspects of the question are fully answered and explored. Opinions are developed from the analysis of the texts, are relevant and well supported. Texts have been clearly and successfully analysed. Within word limit.	The question may not be fully answered. Opinions may not be fully developed from the analysis of the texts. Opinions may not be relevant or well supported. A good attempt to analyse texts, although there may be some misunderstanding or misrepresentation of ideas from the texts Within word limit.	The question has not been fully answered. Opinions are inadequate, irrelevant or missing. Texts have not been analysed, or have been misunderstood or misrepresented. May not be within the word limit.		
Essay organisation and structure	Excellent overall and within paragraph structure. Cohesive devices are used skilfully and naturally.	Good overall and paragraph structure, but with errors in key features. Cohesive devices are used, but not always accurately or appropriately. Ideas may be difficult to follow at times.	Poor organisation. No or insufficient paragraphing. No or only very basic attempts at coherence. Ideas are difficult to follow.		
Referencing of sources	Sources have been correctly referenced throughout. Key information and ideas have been paraphrased.	Sources have generally been correctly referenced, although there may be a few errors. Paraphrasing has been attempted with some success.	Sources have not been correctly referenced. Paraphrasing has not been attempted.		
Language	A broad and sophisticated use of language is demonstrated throughout. Errors are rare and minor. Appropriate register throughout. A wide-range of vocabulary is used accurately. Excellent spelling and punctuation. The writer's voice is consistent.	A good but not always successful attempt at using both varied and sophisticated sentence structure. Errors persist in both basic and complex structures. There may be some problems with register. Vocabulary is sufficient for the task although errors persist in word choice, spelling and/punctuation. Errors may affect meaning at times.	Only basic sentences attempted. Most sentences contain errors. Register may be inappropriate. Vocabulary is minimally sufficient for the task. Persistent errors in word choice spelling and/or punctuation affect meaning.	(Score X 2)	

2. What Did We Do Differently?

## 2.1. Exploring the rubric in some greater depth

- In groups, explore 1 criterion (focussing on 5-4 range)
- What does each of the descriptors mean?
- What do you need to put into your essay in order to score 5-4 in your group's assigned criterion?

	5-4
Group Work	Worked very well as part of a group.
Essay Planning	A detailed plan provides evidence of well thought out planning of the essay.
General understanding of the essay question and texts and critical analysis of texts.	All aspects of the question are fully answered and explored. Opinions are developed from the analysis of the texts, are relevant and well supported. Texts have been clearly and successfully analysed. Within word limit.
Essay organisation and structure	Excellent overall and within paragraph structure. Cohesive devices are used skilfully and naturally.
Referencing of sources	Sources have been correctly referenced throughout. Key information and ideas have been paraphrased.
Language	A broad and sophisticated use of language is demonstrated throughout. Errors are rare and minor. Appropriate register throughout. A wide-range of vocabulary is used accurately. Excellent spelling and punctuation. The writer's voice is consistent.

2.1. Exploring the rubric in some greater depth
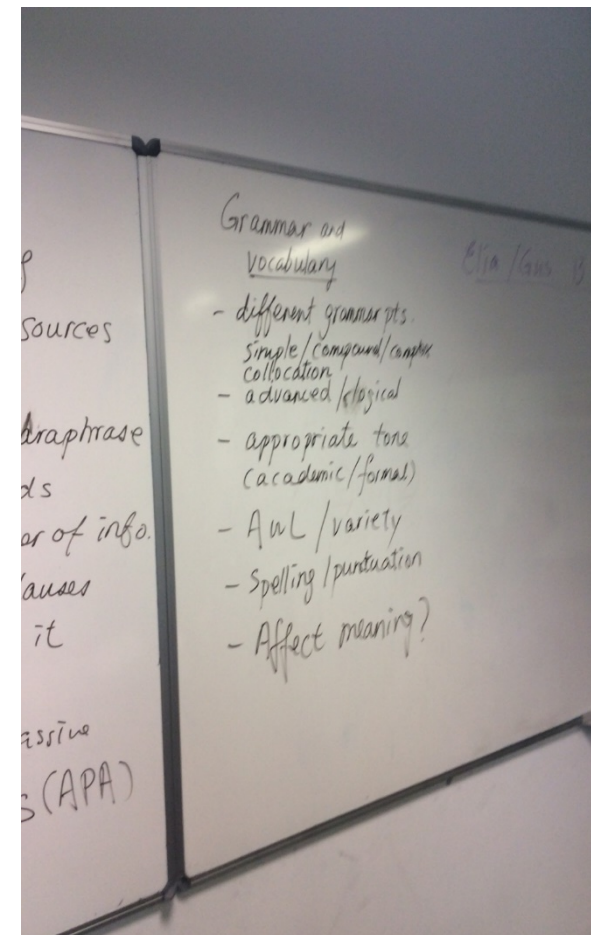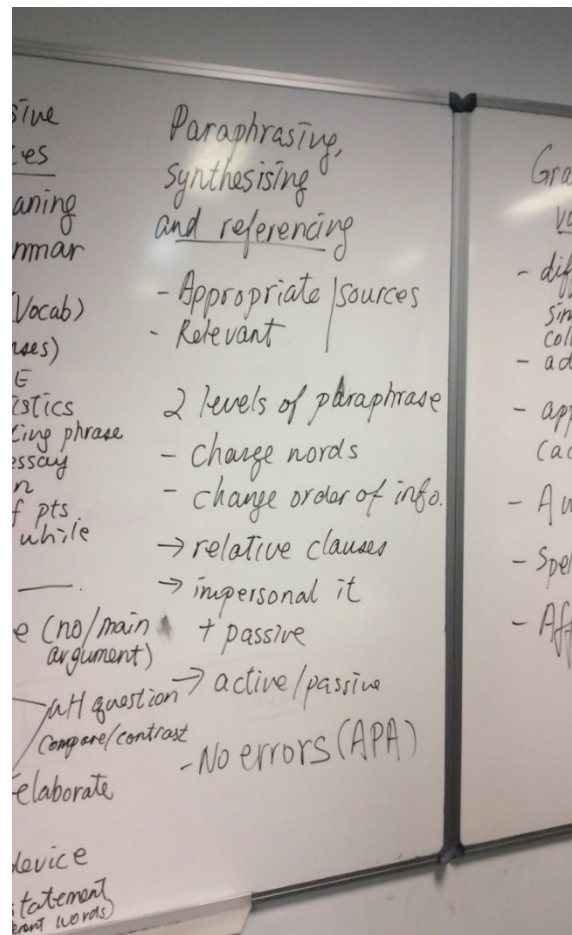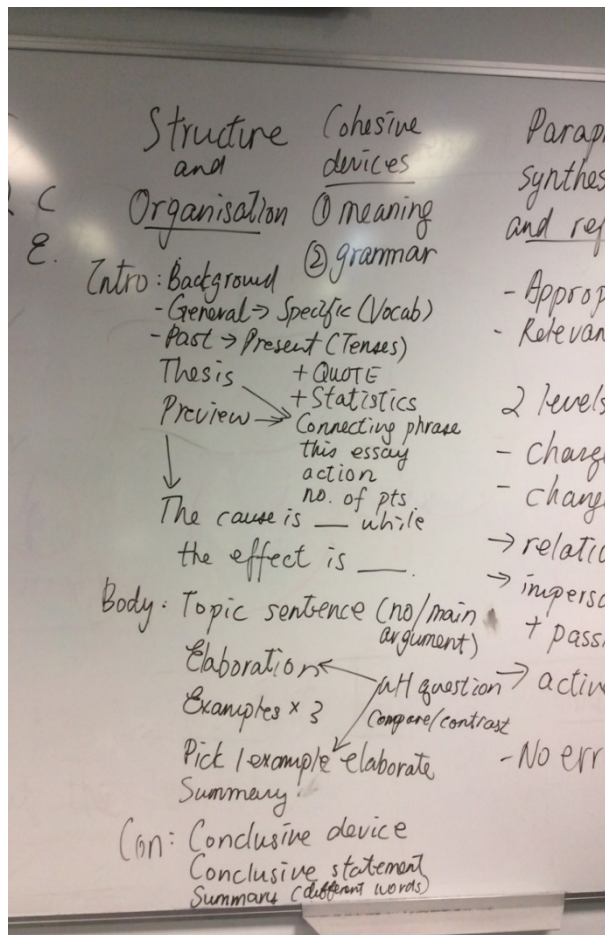
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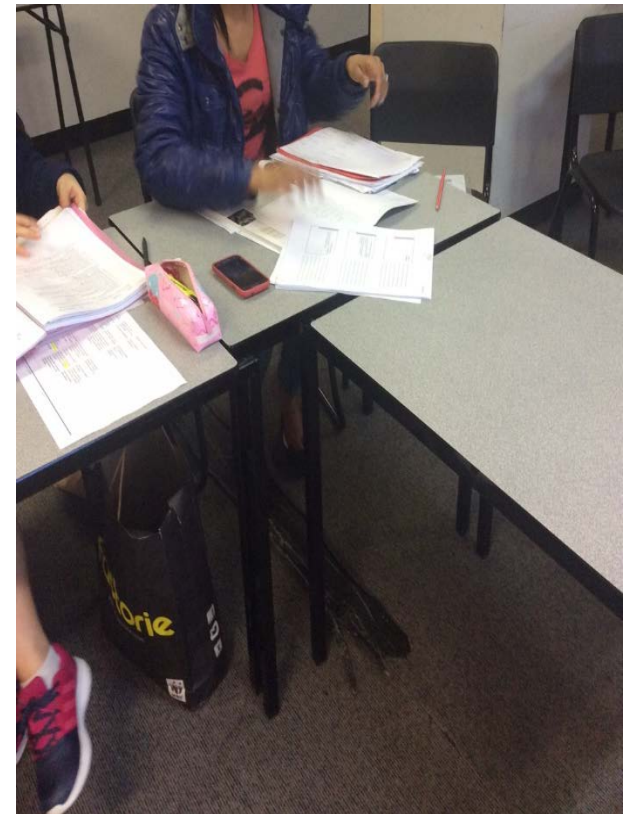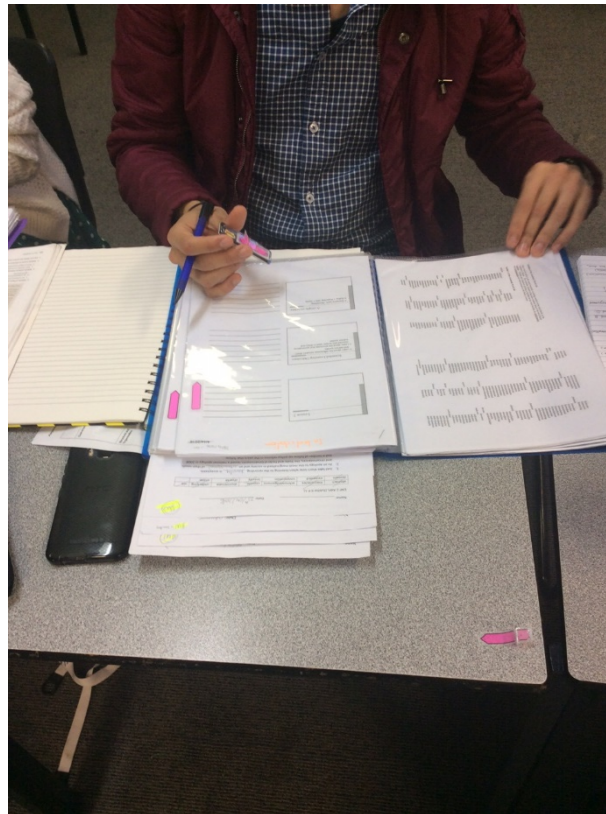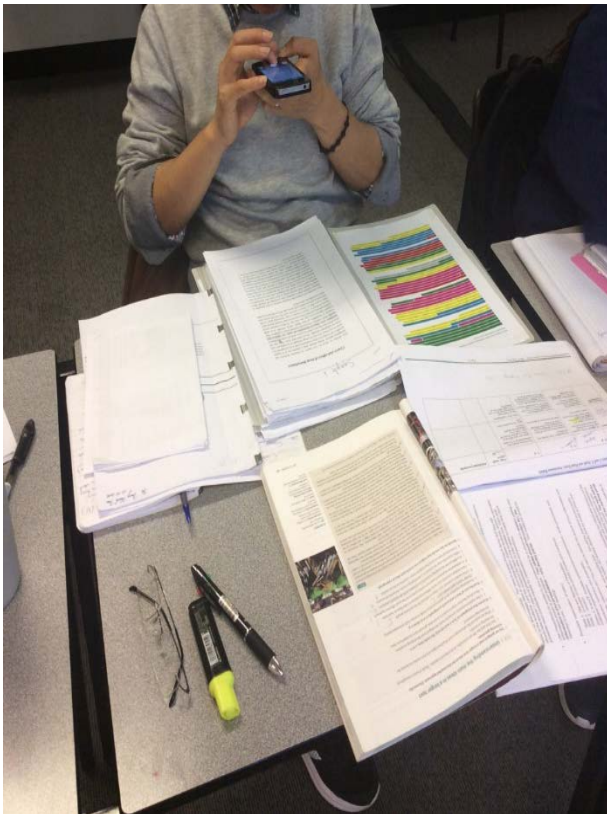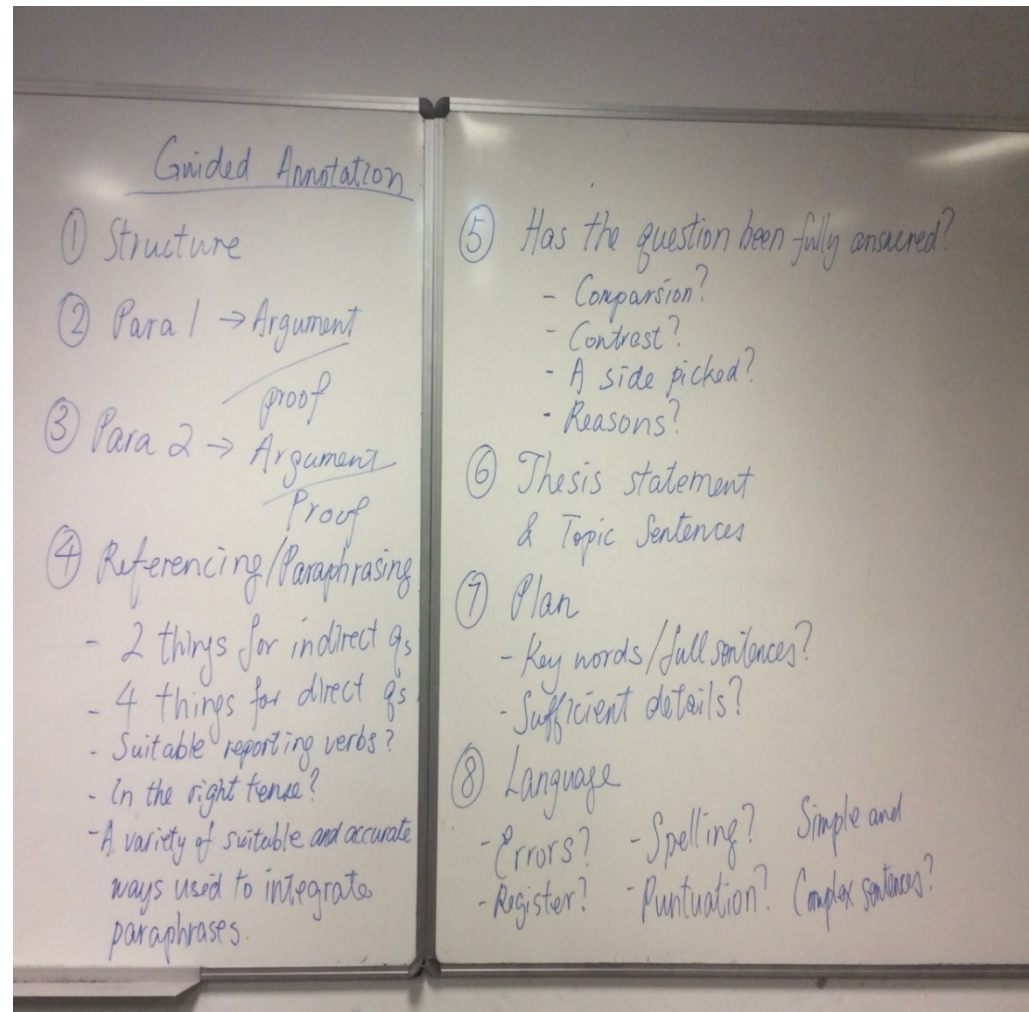
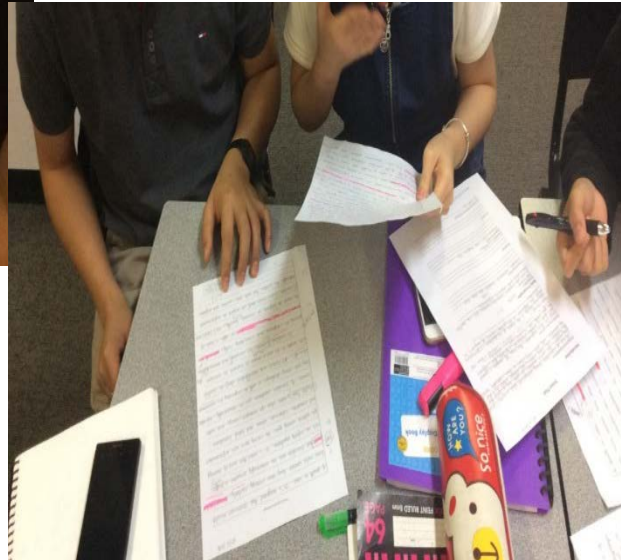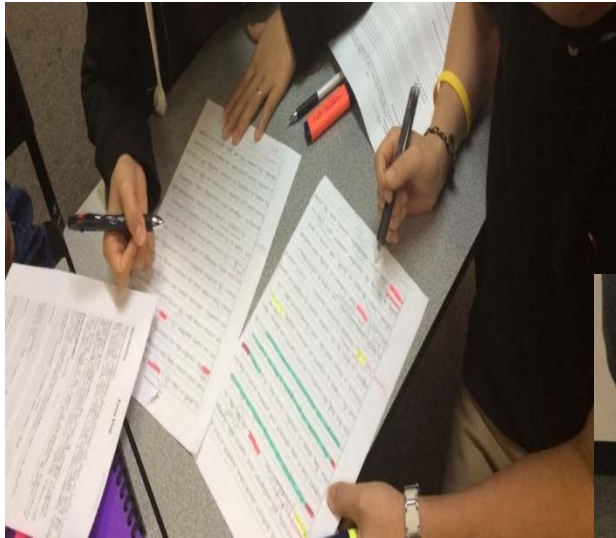- Aim: Build an explicit/strong link between learning and teaching activities and assessment task
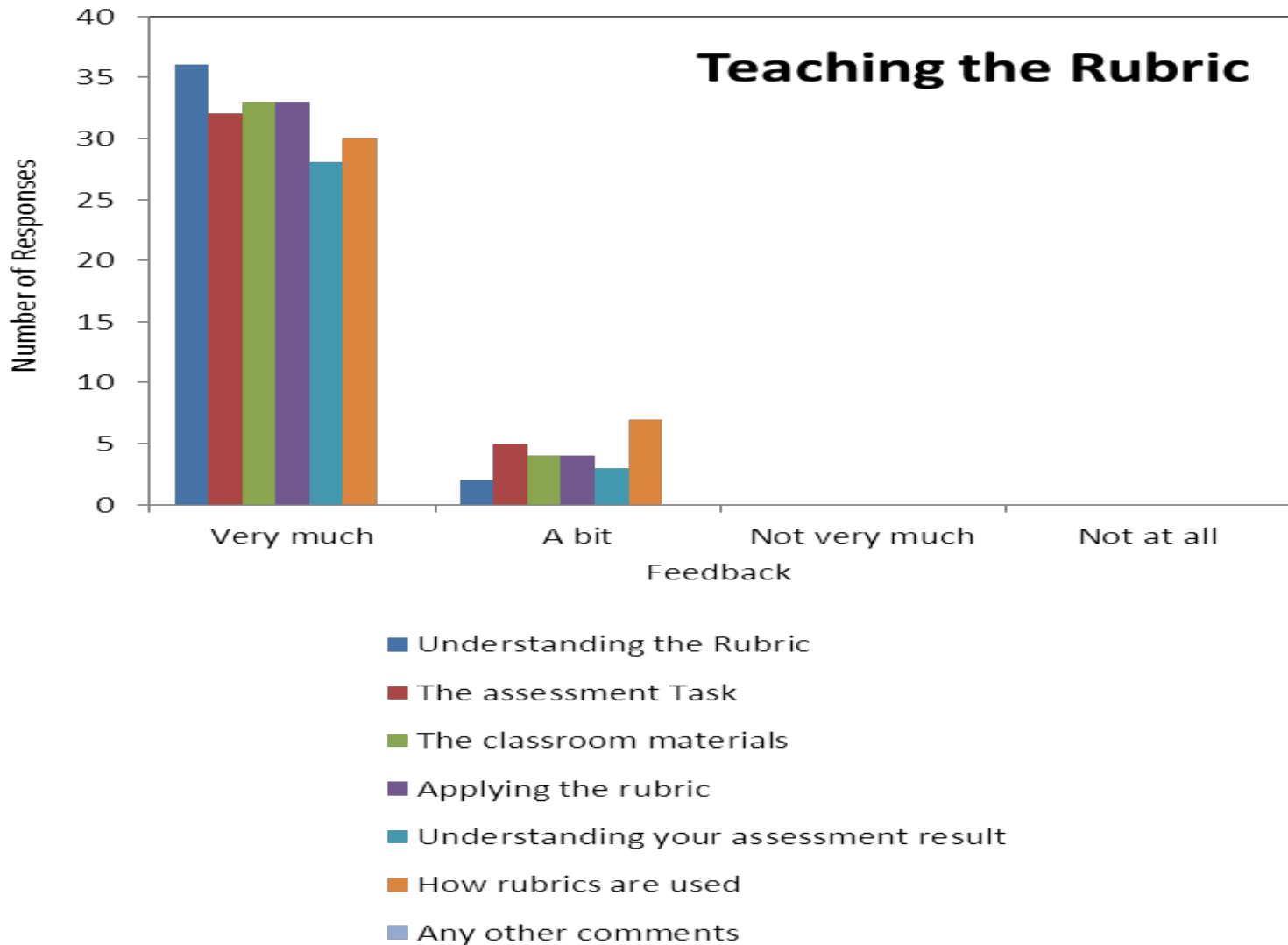
2.3. In-class moderation

2. What Did We Do Differently?

2.3. In-class moderation

Student Feedback to Teaching Rubric sessions

Student Feedback to Teaching Rubric sessions (raw data)

		Very much	A bit	Not very much	Not at all
1	Understanding the Rubric	36	2	0	0
2	The assessment task	32	5	0	0
3	The classroom materials	33	4	0	0
4	Applying the rubric	33	4	0	0
5	Understanding your assessment result	28	3	0	0
6	How rubrics are used	30	7	0	0

3. Student Feedback: Comments

"I think using a Rubric is very important for students because it makes the expectations of the teacher more clear."

"In my home country teachers often mark based on their passions. Therefore, Rubrics are very interesting."

"Use Rubrics more often in class (not just for some skills)."

"Force the student to look at rubric often makes them always have a reference of quality in all their homework or assessments."

3. Student Feedback: Comments

"I think Rubric is very useful. It's fair for students when teacher's mark the essay."

"It would be better if we use the rubric not just for the main task but for different activities we do during the course."

"It's good for us to mark the sample essay following the rubric."

"You'd done very well. I love it."

4. Recommendations

- The implementation of a 3-part *Learning with Rubrics* program.

- Session 1. Analysing the rubric: Identifying key words and explore the specific meaning of each criterion.

- Session 2. Collating teaching materials: Relating teaching materials and activities to competencies contained within the rubric.

- Session 3. Moderating sample essays: Strengthen the link between learning and teaching activities, and assessment task.

   * Team teaching is encouraged at each stage

5. Moving Forward

Flow on Benefits for Teachers

- Maintaining standards of teaching and moderation (Yes, teachers are sometimes islands!)

- Encouraging sharing and interaction among teachers

- Facilitating mentoring for new teachers

5. Moving Forward

Discussion points:

- Have you participated in a similar program?

- Is this a useful tool for your centre?

- Is such a tool adaptable to IELTS Preparation and General English courses?

References

- Biggs, J.B., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (4th ed.). Maidenhead, England: Open University Press. Retrieved from http://www.acu.eblib.com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=798265&echo=1&userid=z5E1vOqTtCM%3d&tstamp=1457825182&id=9967584351C2F0AFAE24AB709BC179EDDD0C41E8

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