Managing Faster Feedback

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Overview

- Teaching context

- Issues

    - Timely feedback

    - Sharing best practice

- Getting timely feedback: Closing the loop

- Sharing best practice: Connecting through feedback process

Teaching context

School of ICT Griffith

3 campuses

- Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT)
- Bachelor of Computer Science (BCS)
- Bachelor of Applied Information Technology (BAIT)
- Double degrees (Engineering, Science, Criminology, Business…)
- Master of Information Technology, Enterprise Architecture, Information Systems

Students

- OP cut off for BIT is currently 14 but has been as low as 17
- Large number of students in 13+ range
- Many students are first in family university students (typically > 60%)

Issue

Two key issues:

How do we get timely feedback?

How do we create a collegial environment where we can share what we have learnt?

Existing feedback processes

Existing formal university wide feedback processes

- Comprised of 5 point Likert Style questions and open ended text

- **Student Evaluation of Course (SEC)**
  - All students are invited to complete an online course evaluation
  - Completed towards the end of the course

- **Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)**
  - All students are invited to complete an online teaching evaluation for the teaching staff
  - Completed towards the end of the course

Both of these formal processes provide detailed and useful feedback

Issues with existing feedback processes

Some Issues with formal end of semester feedback (SEC and SET)

- Both the SEC and SET feedback processes are useful

- However, they are not timely (I'm impatient and I want it now :)

- Students may choose to not participate

    - Their feedback will not benefit them, it can only benefit future cohorts

- The data is generally considered private

    - Limited potential for sharing best practice with peers

Getting timely feedback

Closing the loop

- In 2012 a new initiative called "closing the loop" was introduced

- Supported by Dean Learning and Teaching

- Implemented throughout Griffith Sciences group

Premise

- Gather feedback early in each course, not only at the end

- Formalise the feedback process, everyone does it

- Close the feedback loop by formally responding to the feedback

- Students can see the impact of their feedback

Closing the loop process

Week 4

- Teaching staff perform a data gathering exercise

- Staff can choose how to gather data, but must be anonymous

    - Types of data collection processes have included

        - Harvard Minute Paper

        - Stop Start Continue Change

        - Plus Minus Interesting

        - Focus group (with non-teaching staff facilitator)

Alternative feedback approaches

Harvard Minute Paper

- Anonymous paper-based way to collect information on two questions:

    1. *What is the most important thing you learned during this session?*
    2. *What important question remains unanswered?*

- Students take 1 minute to write down their thoughts on the questions

- Allows students time to give a considered response to a current learning activity

Alternative feedback approaches

Stop Start Continue Change

- Anonymous paper-based way to collect information on:
    - What is not working and should be **stopped**
    - What should be **started** to improve an aspect of the course
    - What is working well and should be **continued**
    - What is working to some extend but should be **changed**

Plus Minus Interesting

- Anonymous paper-based way to collect information on:
    - What are the **positive** aspects of the course
    - What are the **negative** aspects of the course
    - What aspects of the course are **interesting**

Closing the loop process

Week 5

- Teaching staff analyse the data that has been gathered

- Top two or three issues are identified

  - Weighted by relative importance and impact

- A response is developed for each of the top issues

  - Each issue has an implementation plan

Note: Something **that is missing from this process** is an evaluation on how well the implementation worked

The analysis of the impact would usually happen after the course has finished, when the course is reviewed.

Closing the loop process

Week 6

- Teaching staff close the feedback loop by:

    - Discussing the feedback that was received

    - Disseminating the action plan to students

Ideally, teaching staff also check in with students to see if the proposed action plan will meet the student needs

Note: Something **that is missing from this process** is sharing what has been learnt with peers

Closing the loop implementation

What we experienced in the school of ICT

- Many staff members needed assistance with the process

    - Which feedback gathering option was most appropriate?

        - Many options to choose from, how to choose?

        - What are the implications of each option?

    - How to identify the most important issues?

    - Given a particular issue, how to address it?

    - What is the most effective way to communicate the issue and the steps taken to address it?

Closing the loop implementation

Learning and Teaching Champions

- The school has 4 Learning and Teaching (LNT) Champions

    - Academics that are appointed based on LNT performance

    - Tasked with supporting school staff around LNT issues

- LNT champions became a source of support for teaching staff engaged in the Closing the Loop process

Closing the loop implementation

What we learnt from the Closing the Loop process

- Teaching was still seen to be a very private activity

- Experimenting with new ideas and approaches could be threatening

    - Could adversely impact SEC and SET

    - What if I don't like what students are telling me?

- Teaching staff would talk to LNT champions, but usually not each other

- Things that were learnt by one staff member were not easily available to other staff

- The changes were course specific and not easily generalisable to the other courses in the same discipline or degree program

Improving the Closing the loop process

Aim

- A feedback process that academics want to engage with

    - The benefits should be self-evident

    - The process should create value for academics

- A feedback process that enables academics to share their experiences

    - Learn from each other

    - Develop collaborative strategies for implementing change

    - Enable conversations about discipline and program level change

        - Not just course level

We call this the *Connecting through feedback* process

Connecting through feedback process

The Connecting through feedback process would:

- Build trust to discuss learning and teaching issues collaboratively

- Enable academics to work collegially

- Value colleagues, their issues and experiences

- Reduce isolation

- Build relationships

- Break down course centric thinking

- Share ideas

- Support each other

Reading between the lines: **We want to change the culture**

Connecting through feedback process

Based on an action/experiential learning cycle

Connecting through feedback

1. Action
   - This is the teaching activity
   - Covers weeks 1 through 4

2. Review
   - Use the Closing the loop activity already in place to gather feedback
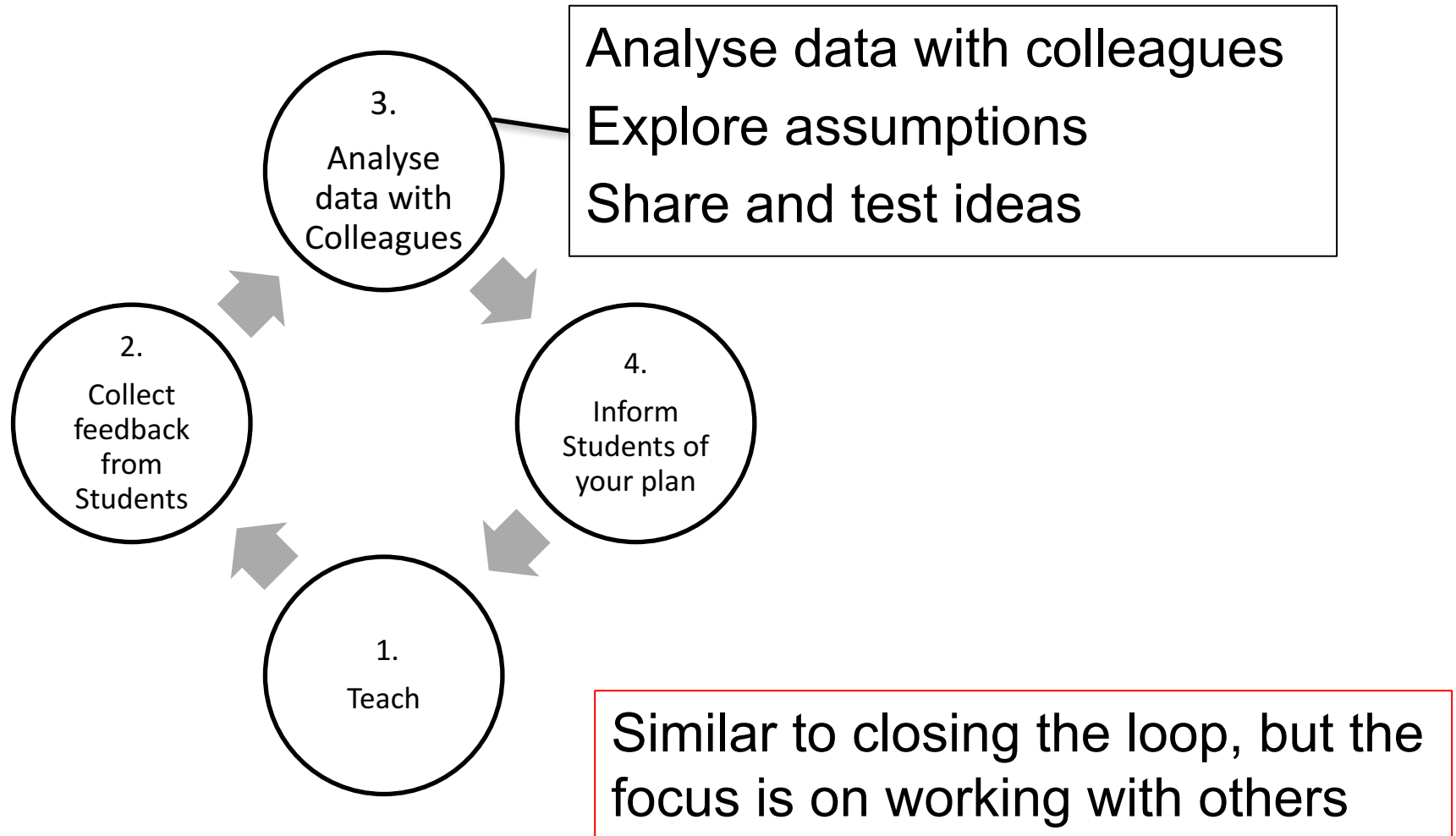   - Gather data in week 4 and review for key issues

3. Interpret
   - Analyse and discuss data with colleagues in a 1 hour session in week 5 or 6 (this is the key component)
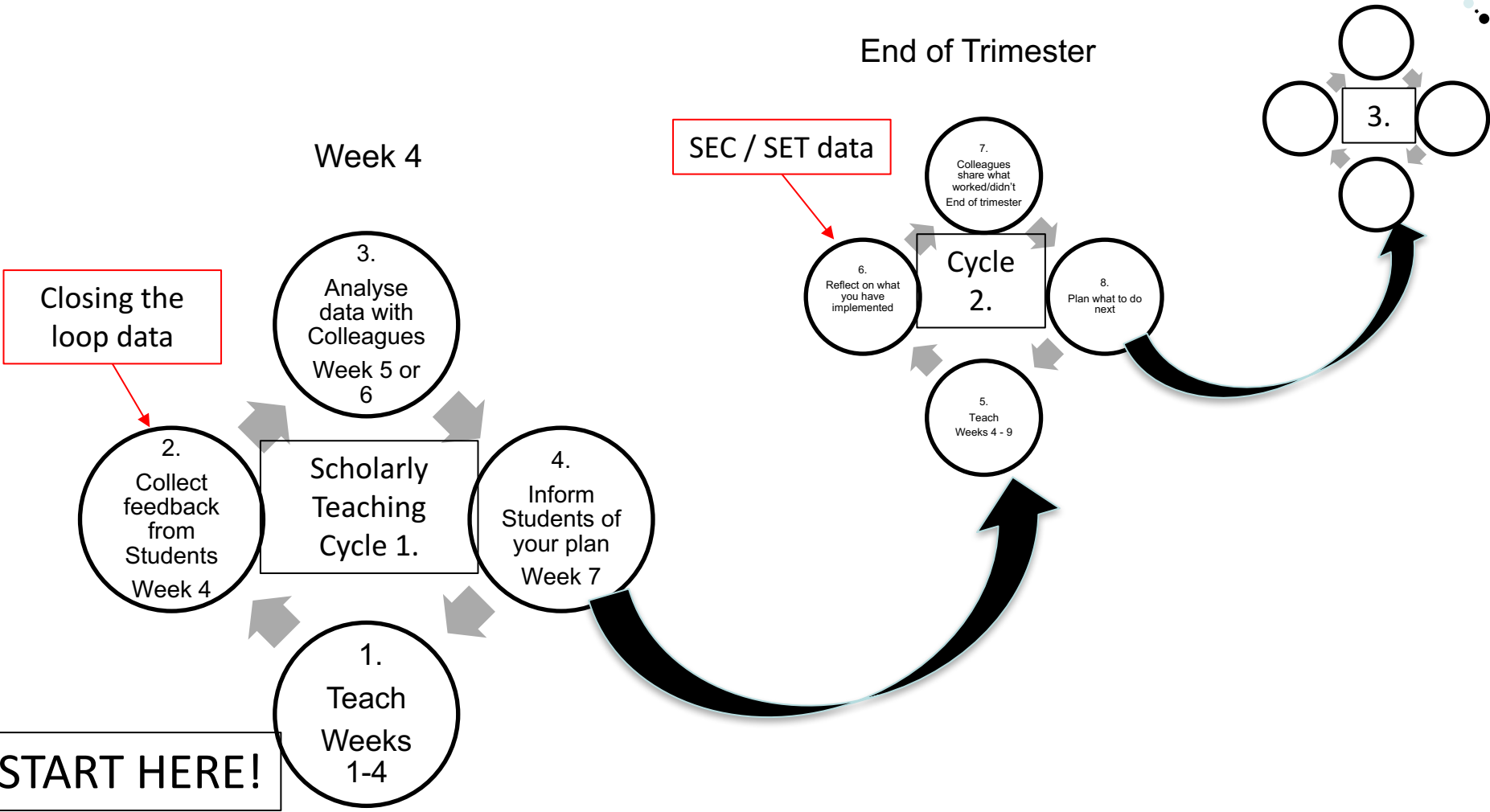
4. Plan
   - Develop a plan to implement change
   - Disseminate plan to students in week 7 (close the loop)

Connecting through feedback cycle

```
        3.
      Analyse
     data with  ───────  Analyse data with colleagues
    Colleagues           Explore assumptions
                         Share and test ideas

  2.                        4.
Collect                   Inform
feedback                Students of
 from                    your plan
Students

        1.
       Teach              Similar to closing the loop, but the
                          focus is on working with others
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Connecting through feedback process

School of Information and Communication Technology

Step 3: Analyse data with colleagues

Step 3: What happens in the 1 hour session with all teaching staff

- Teaching staff form groups of 3

- Spend 10 minutes each focusing on each person's data
  - Explore theories and assumptions

- Take turns in analysing the data

- Other two colleagues' role is to ask 'curious questions'
  - Does this feedback fit with your experience of the course?
  - What parts, if any of this feedback are surprising?
  - What is your reaction to the suggestions?

- Avoid jumping to solutions too early

Step 3: Analyse data with colleagues

Once the discussions have completed:

- Everyone is asked to create an action plan

- Asked to commit to 1 or 2 actions that will make the MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE

- Asked to prepare to disseminate the plan to students and teaching staff (including sessional staff)

Finally, there is a debrief to highlight the main themes from the discussions

Outcomes

Has Connecting through feedback been successful since it started in Semester 1, 2014?

- In November 2014, the school reported significant improvement in the targeted Key Performance Indicators.

- The percentage of courses with Student Experience of Course (SEC) results < 3.5 **went down from 26.2% (S2 2013) to 6.5% (S2 2014)**

- In 2015, in a nationally benchmarked, "Overall Satisfaction" measure, the school was ranked number 1 in Australia, up from 35 the previous year.

- Academic staff generally value the 1 hour sessions, and have resisted proposals to reduce the time allocated to discussions

- There is a sense that this activity is important and the only time staff get to have these type of conversations

Wrapping up

Discussed:

- A week 4 individual Closing the loop feedback gathering process

    - Focused on getting timely feedback near the start of the course

- A Connecting through feedback process

    - Focused on working collegially and sharing what we learnt

Questions / comments / feedback? :)