

Peer review from the university team:

Dear....[teachers in school B],

Thank you for the privilege of being able to take a close look at the term 2 unit plan and assessment tasks. We each reviewed the unit plan and assessment tasks separately and then we were able to meet together and share ideas. As we come from different areas of research expertise - English curriculum, Inclusive education, and Assessment - there were ideas we all agreed on and some of your ideas prompted rich debate. I have synthesised the main ideas onto this page, and am sending you through copies of your documents with our various annotations. We hope that they are useful to you in your own discussions. We certainly learned a lot from you. At some stage early next term we would like to visit for another interview and hear your feedback on the feedback.

Overall thoughts:

The assessment task sheet was simple and clear in the layout and easy for students to access. The annotations along the side helped us see where you were deliberately planning opportunities for critical and creative agency. There was a tight and clear focus on the development of the relevant skills. It was terrific to see the opportunities for peer review embedded into the unit plan, along with options to connect regularly with the concepts that inform the assessment.

Content validity:

We had some good debate about the opening activities. Maybe this will prompt your own debate:

Jill's thoughts - Model in the opening lesson some of the connections to the students' experiences, their background knowledge and their own sense of integrity that you identify as a major theme. At the moment this is the first homework task, but this is leaving it to students to engage and make the connections themselves, rather than have the teacher acknowledge their world and what they bring to the topic.

Kelli was commenting on how tightly focused the unit plan was and whether it was too closed and you had missed an opportunity to allow students to connect to experts outside of the classroom, or bring the experts into the classroom. Could you open up the unit through an overarching inquiry focus like: Should students in the 21st c study *The Crucible*?

Linda disagreed - She thinks that these links to contexts outside of the main text can be confusing for students who may have difficulties with recognising the main point for the unit. She thought that beginning with *The Crucible* background as you have is a more focussed approach.

From this discussion, even though we did not reach agreement over the best way to introduce a unit, we did agree that it would be helpful for you to clarify the big idea that you raise in the unit preamble. You mentioned that the aim is to "empower students to think differently about *how* they are learning and writing". We weren't sure what you meant here. It looks like a grand vision, but one that is not quite resolved. Were you referring to students being more metacognitive? Taking responsibility for the developing an ownership of quality through the peer review activities? Were you thinking that students were to learn more than just how to respond to a set assesment task, but focus their learning beyond the task? Resolving this focus a little more would seem to be important.

To cross check the content validity, we colour coded the unit plan to check where students would have the opportunity to learn the main skills and ideas that align with the assessment task using 4 colours for the skills:

- Analysis - green (week 3 lesson 4, week 6 lesson 4)
- Evaluation/creativity (think differently) - blue (week 1 lesson 3, Week 2 lesson 3, week 4, lesson 2, week 7 lesson 3 & 4)
- Themes - orange (week 1 lesson 2, week 2 lesson 3, week 5 lesson 3)
- Essay writing structures - red (week 1 lessons 2 & 4, week 2 lessons 4 & 5, week 3 lessons 1 & 2, week 6 lessons 1, 2 & 3).

We had a few suggestions to help strengthen the content validity:

1. The skill of analysis seemed to be only slightly emphasised in two lessons. It was difficult to know as there were quite a few lessons that were booklet work, and we didn't have access to the booklets. It might be worth checking as this is the main thinking skill required for success in the assessment task.
2. The Objectives column was a great link to show the alignment between syllabus objectives and activities. This would help teachers stay close to the syllabus intent. We suggest that you number the objectives, and then you could do a cross check or mapping of frequency to see whether there are any that were missed. It would also enable you to decide which might be foregrounded as first order priorities in this unit, and which are background in this unit, but maybe emphasised in another unit.
3. When you have resolved the big idea for the unit, find ways to highlight that learning in the unit.

Construct validity: Assessment task

The task was clearly outlined and all of the reviewers commended the clarity of the questions, and the fact that students could choose from four questions. The students would have had opportunity to learn the skills and content needed to answer the questions.

The main concern about the construct validity was with the audience and purpose that were identified. We recognised that assigning the audience of year 11 peers was to create an authentic audience, however writing for peers does invite a shift/slip in the analytical modality. Writing for peers, and writing online, requires a slightly informal/formal register. We wondered if this was addressed anywhere, or even if a specific audience was necessary. Our discussion ranged from thoughts about making the database a real one and teaching about the genre of online academic blogging to making an alternative authentic audience that may have a more formal and traditional modality like the critical introduction to a QPAC program for a local production of the play, to just making the audience the teacher assessor/examiner. We leave this with you to resolve.

Consequential validity/Differentiation/Opportunities for critical and creative agency:

Consequential validity is a challenging aspect to consider. It is hard to predict which students may not experience success as we don't know your students like you do. The general differentiation strategies that are written into the unit plan are good reminders for teachers. We wondered whether there were more specific strategies that come to mind with this cohort of students. What would be their greatest barriers to success? Can some of the learning be designed to remove those barriers for everyone? Eg: All students given access to the play and video ahead of time to enable those students who need more time to pre-read play, or students with anxiety working with peers in activities requiring public sharing of ideas. Are there some students who have not seen any live theatre production who may not appreciate the role of conflict and dialogue for the success of a play? Would there be some students who have lived in cultures where strong collectivist community traditions are well accepted and who may not recognise the western dilemmas?

It was great to see throughout the unit plan that there were multiple ways to engage with content and multiple means of representation. There were opportunities for discussions and the socratic dialogue will be a purposeful and supportive pedagogic highlight.

The unit seems quite teacher directed. Do students have an opportunity to raise questions or make learning suggestions?

We were concerned about the pre-amble comments about setting learning goals that differentiated by quantity of learning ("All students will...Some students may...A few students might....). This paradigm reflects a traditional/hierarchical view of intelligence where only a few people can achieve lofty heights. Instead we suggest a spatial/horizontal metaphor (We want you all to explore.. Some students may extend their exploration to show.. Others may explore alternative or deeper connections by.....). It fits within the zone of proximal development (or Gordon Stobart's growth zones) and it implies that everyone can learn, it is just that for some topics, they may need different directions. This is part of Jill's campaign to shift discourses of assessment from 'covering' the curriculum which equates to burying or skating over a known body of knowledge to 'discovering' ideas which opens up the possibility that all of us can be knowledge makers. Just a few thoughts to leave you with.

We hope these ideas are helpful in provoking some more creative thinking about the learning you have planned. It looks like a terrific unit of work. We are looking forward to hearing how it goes, both from you and some of your students.

Jill, Kelli, Linda and Kylie.