Dr Susan Anderson, Associate Professor in Pathology, Division of Medical Sciences & Graduate Entry Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Dearing Award 2014

The effective contribution to the education of our students is the most important aspect of the diverse role of an academic. I feel privileged to be involved in teaching and learning and my focus is on actively engaging students, involving them in their learning by creating their own resources or using novel technology. I also enjoy being responsive to student needs and adapting my teaching to support areas of difficulty.

My aim is to demystify microanatomy and pathology in medicine and related disciplines, to make it accessible and understandable and to classify it within broad clinically-related themes. This is achieved through (i) taking the time to translate and explain complex terminology, taking the jargon out and ensuring students can give a broad overview of a disease just from its name and (ii) using (usually food based!) analogies to explain complex structures and the effect of disease on these. This is done in traditional lecture settings and in small group workshops, virtual microscope sessions, tutorials, PBL sessions and practical classes.

I endeavour to cater for a diverse range of learning styles, using analogies, images, pathological specimens, videos and online teaching packages. I make all my resources available well in advance, and record all my lectures using Echo360. Our collaborative sketch of a stomach cell’s acid-secretion mechanism was photographed in a workshop and shared instantly via student Facebook pages and students email me articles of interest related to my teaching.

To allow for histology teaching in the new BSc degree, I established a virtual microscope at Nottingham (funded by the University T&L Development Fund). This allows students to interact with the best of our teaching microscope slides in an online environment that simulates a microscope.

I have championed the development of the staff engaged in Problem Based Learning facilitation via peer observation and I introduced a way of ensuring effective feedback from students to PBL facilitators via an anonymous individual feedback facility so that facilitators can use this in their continuing professional development.

In an effort to help our students who are incredibly bright and hard-working to maximise their potential mark, I formulated a peer marking scheme. My aim was to incorporate some of the best practice in feedback by providing rapid feedback to students, getting them to critically evaluate their answers and giving them the opportunity to see a range of answer styles, reflecting on how they might improve. This has received very good feedback and analysis of the data suggest that it has had a significant effect on the performance of participants (about half the cohort).