

No Students ≠ No Work

Written by Dylan Kissane

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DYLAN KISSANE, DEC 3 2013

It's finally here: the end of the Fall semester and yet another period of transition in the academic year.

This semester has been rather stressful on the teaching front at CEFAM as I've had to manage four different sections in four different classes, plus another two online courses, including POL 210. It's a heavy teaching load and while I enjoy the contact with the students, I have to admit that I am looking forward to the semester closing down this Friday.

Yet even if the teaching stops on Friday, the closing down of a course at the end of a semester takes longer. There is obviously the grading to be done and, this semester, that grading amounts to final papers or reports in all courses, plus a final exam in one, too. With grading out of the way it's time to calculate the final grades, a task made far easier by the use of the GradeBook Pro app on my iPad, a tool that has become indispensable over the last couple of years for keeping all my courses in line.

I try and submit my grades as quickly as I can and for any student who did not reach the required threshold to pass the course – at CEFAM it is 73% – I write short notes to the Director of Studies so that she is aware of why the student did not pass.

Then it's on to the post-semester review. All of my courses get a once-over so that issues that have arisen during the semester can be addressed ahead of the next time the course is offered. Usually this involves looking over my own notes, getting feedback directly from the students, and reviewing my formal teaching evaluations. All of these provide good insights into how the course can be modified to promote better learning outcomes or to address a subject in a more effective way. Depending on the course this process can take anything from a couple of hours to a couple of days between the Fall and the Spring, with extra time allotted for reviews between each academic year as the courses get full overhauls and updates.

I can usually count on finishing all of this grading, administration and revision by mid-December, leaving me about a week to move onto the myriad of other things that demand my attention at the present. That final week before my Christmas vacation will include the completion of a conference paper I am writing with a colleague in the US, editing and revisions for a couple of journal articles, serving on a couple of internship juries for students who will shortly leave for the US to complete their studies, and organising major elements for the new academic semester.

The first of these elements is the Freshman Orientation program. I deliver two lectures in this program: the first goes into the expectations that faculty have for their students in the classroom and in terms of their work outside of class, while the second teaches students some strategies for effective preparation, planning and study.

The second of the major elements I have to prepare relates to the Spring Faculty Meeting. This Spring we'll launch a new Faculty Evaluation Program which has been in the process of development for most of the year. This needs to be presented, explained and launched on schedule. In addition, we'll welcome four new faculty to the school in the Spring and it's my job to ensure their entry goes smoothly.

Looking forward to the next month, then, it's easy to see that the job of a professor extends well outside of the

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classroom. While my students might be heading for the Alps for a week of skiing before returning home for the holidays, their professors will be closing down courses, refreshing others, preparing for the Spring and getting through the administrative tasks that pile up when we prioritise teaching and learning in the final weeks of class. I'm looking forward to my break but I'm under no illusions that it will be anything much more than a short breather before things get rolling again.

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Read more from Dylan Kissane in his e-IR blog [Political Business](#)

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