

How can Teaching and Learning Centres effectively contribute to enhancing the student learning experience and outcomes?

Presenters:

Dr Dale Holt, Associate Director, Institute of Teaching and Learning, Deakin University.
Dr Stuart Palmer, Senior Lecturer, Institute of Teaching and Learning, Deakin University.
Professor Gail Huon, Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of Newcastle.
Associate Professor, Sandra Jones, College of Business, RMIT University.
Professor Ian MacDonald, Director, Teaching and Learning Centre, University of New England.

Facilitator: Dr Di Challis, Challis Consultancy – Senior project researcher.

Outcomes:

By the completion of the workshop participants will have:

1. been briefed on the findings to date of the ALTC national project “Strategic Leadership for Institutional Teaching and Learning Centres: Developing a Model for the 21st Century” relating to the contribution that Centres make to enhancing the student learning experience;
2. collaborated in exploring key issues relating to Centre contribution to enhancing the student learning experience;
3. shared strategies from a range of different institutional contexts for improving the contribution that Centres make to enhancing the student learning experience; and
4. assisted in framing future analysis for the ALTC project.

Intended audience:

This workshop is aimed at all those parties with an interest in the contribution that Teaching and Learning Centres make to enhancing the student learning experience and outcomes. This includes, but is not limited to:

- DVC/PVC(Academic) or equivalent;
- Directors (or equivalent) of Teaching and Learning Centres;
- other staff of Teaching and Learning Centres;
- Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) or equivalent;
- Associate Heads of School (Teaching and Learning) (or equivalent);
- Faculty (or equivalent) academic development staff; and
- students and student representative bodies.

About the presenters:

Dr Di Challis

Dr Di Challis, Challis Consultancy, is a consultant to the ALTC funded project ‘Strategic Leadership for Institutional Teaching and Learning Centres’ and, in that role, as a senior researcher, has been closely involved with the research that underpins this workshop. Prior to setting up Challis Consultancy in 2006, she was a senior lecturer at Deakin University, working in the Institute of Teaching and Learning and headed academic professional development.

Dr Dale Holt

Dr Dale Holt is Associate Director of the Institute of Teaching and Learning at Deakin University with active participation in Educational Design, Professional Development and Research. Dale has coordinated major academic professional development programs and his

responsibilities see him heavily involved in the University's Strategic Teaching and Learning Grant Scheme and in supporting staff applying for University and national teaching awards. He was awarded a Carrick Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in 2007, 'For longstanding leadership and support for the professional development of teaching staff to advance student learning in the field of flexible, online and distance education'.

Dr Stuart Palmer

Dr Stuart Palmer completed his undergraduate degree with distinction in electronics engineering. During nearly a decade of professional practice he completed an MBA in technology management. In 1995, he joined the School of Engineering and Technology at Deakin University and lectured in the management of technology. During that time he was awarded the Australasian Association for Engineering Education McGraw-Hill New Engineering Educator Award, and completed his doctoral studies. His research interests include frequency domain image analysis and the effective use of digital/online technologies in teaching and learning. More recently, he has joined the Deakin University Institute of Teaching and Learning.

Professor Gail Huon

Professor Gail Huon is the Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Newcastle. She joined the University in November 2006 after 16 years of teaching and research in the School of Psychology, University of NSW. Her recent research has focussed on the student experience, roles of centres for teaching and learning and key aspects of teaching and learning, which have influenced policy development on educational quality and effectiveness across the university sector.

Associate Professor, Sandra Jones

As the Director of Learning and Teaching Unit at RMIT, Dr Sandra Jones has been engaged in a number of Leadership projects funded by the ALTC. Her interest is in identifying leadership models and frameworks that incorporate a broad range of strategy and professional development across universities to assist both Current and Early Career Academics to develop the skills necessary to lead enhanced student learning opportunities. Sandra is particularly interested in the role of centralised Learning and Teaching units vis-à-vis the distributed model of leadership and has recently completed a Report and Resource Manual on an ALTC funded multi-level distributed leadership model to improve student learning. To develop a holistic picture of the needs of academics, Sandra is currently engaged in a project to improve the student learning experience within the School of Management.

Professor Ian MacDonald

Professor Ian Macdonald, Director, Teaching Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT), Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. Ian trained and worked as a mechanical engineer before moving into Physics teaching. Researching student learning, he gaining a Masters degree and Ph.D. in cognitive psychology. After three years as Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre at the University of New England he became the Founding Director of the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at Victoria University. His research primarily deals with promoting learner metacognition, the development of effective learning environments, and teacher professional development at all levels.

Background / Context:

While the roles and functions of Teaching and Learning Centres are complex and evolving (Havnes & Stensaker, 2006; Knight, 2006; Taylor, 2005), we contend the fundamental reason

such Centres exist is to improve student learning. Hence, the focus of our proposed workshop is the link between the work of Centres and the student experience. Our study reveals that the link between Centre functions and student experience is often indirect (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Gray & Radloff, 2006), with the emphasis being on improving teaching on the assumption that this will improve student learning (Prebble et al., 2005).

It has also been observed that, even though the scholarly rhetoric of learner-centeredness has developed in sophistication, direct consideration of students is often surprisingly absent from such work (Trigwell & Shale, 2004). In a survey we have just completed, it was interesting to observe that the Directors of Centres providing direct student support activities, while highly satisfied with their performance, ranked these activities least important of all functional areas.

Such findings raise three important questions for us, and for the sector:

- **How are Centres currently contributing to good experiences and outcomes for student learning?**
- **How do Centres know their contributions are having the desired effect?**
- **How can Centres enhance their contributions in the future?**

Overview of activities:

In 2007 we received Australian Learning and Teaching Council (formerly Carrick Institute) funding for the project “Strategic Leadership for Institutional Teaching and Learning Centres: Developing a Model for the 21st Century”. The project is being undertaken collaboratively by six universities (Deakin, Macquarie, Monash, RMIT, University of Newcastle and University of New England). A further four universities will be involved in upcoming focus group discussions and 31 Australian universities have been involved through a survey of Directors of Teaching and Learning Centres.

The proposed workshop will:

- Inform participants of the relevant research findings to date. [By the time of the conference the interviews (37 respondents from the six partner universities), surveys (31 respondents from 38 Heads of Centres) and focus group discussions (10 universities) will have been completed and the data analysed].
- Draw on these data to engage participants in exploring the key questions identified above.
- Share exemplars and strategies.

Please note that it is intended that information shared during the workshop will inform our on-going ALTC project.

Detailed plan of workshop activities:

The workshop will be facilitated by the principal researcher who has conducted all of the project interviews and focus group discussions, and will also involve project team partners in providing current examples of institutional strategic initiatives to enhance student engagement and learning. It is intended that the first stage of contextualising the project and summarising the findings by the project leaders will be brief, with findings and exemplars being used as a stimulus for small group discussion and activities that will then lead to a plenary discussion of the emerging issues.

Our intention is for the workshop to be an interactive session that will allow us to explore significant issues to assist Teaching and Learning Centres contribute to enhancing the student learning experience and outcomes. An approximate workshop agenda is:

Workshop Phase	Duration
Presentation of project findings, as related to Centres' contributing to student learning	15 mins
Activity 1 in small groups: Exploring the relationships between the key components of the Strategic Leadership Centre framework diagram	30 mins
Sharing of discussions with whole group	10 mins
Activity 2 in small groups: Examining strategies for addressing key areas of improvements and key constraints in Centre operations	30 mins
Sharing of discussions with whole group	10 mins
Summing up by project team members	25 mins
Workshop Duration	120 mins

References:

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- Knight, P. T. (2006). Quality Enhancement and Educational Professional Development. *Quality in Higher Education*, 12(1), 29-40.
- Prebble, T., Hargraves, H., Leach, L., Naidoo, K., Suddaby, G. & Zepke, N. (2005). *Impact of Student Support Services and Academic Development Programmes on Student Outcomes in Undergraduate Tertiary Study: A Synthesis of the Research*. Wellington: Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
- Taylor, K. L. (2005). Academic Development as Institutional Leadership: An interplay of person, role, strategy, and institution. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 10(1), 31-46.
- Trigwell, K. & Shale, S. (2004). Student learning and the scholarship of university teaching. *Studies in Higher Education*, 29(4), 523 - 536.