

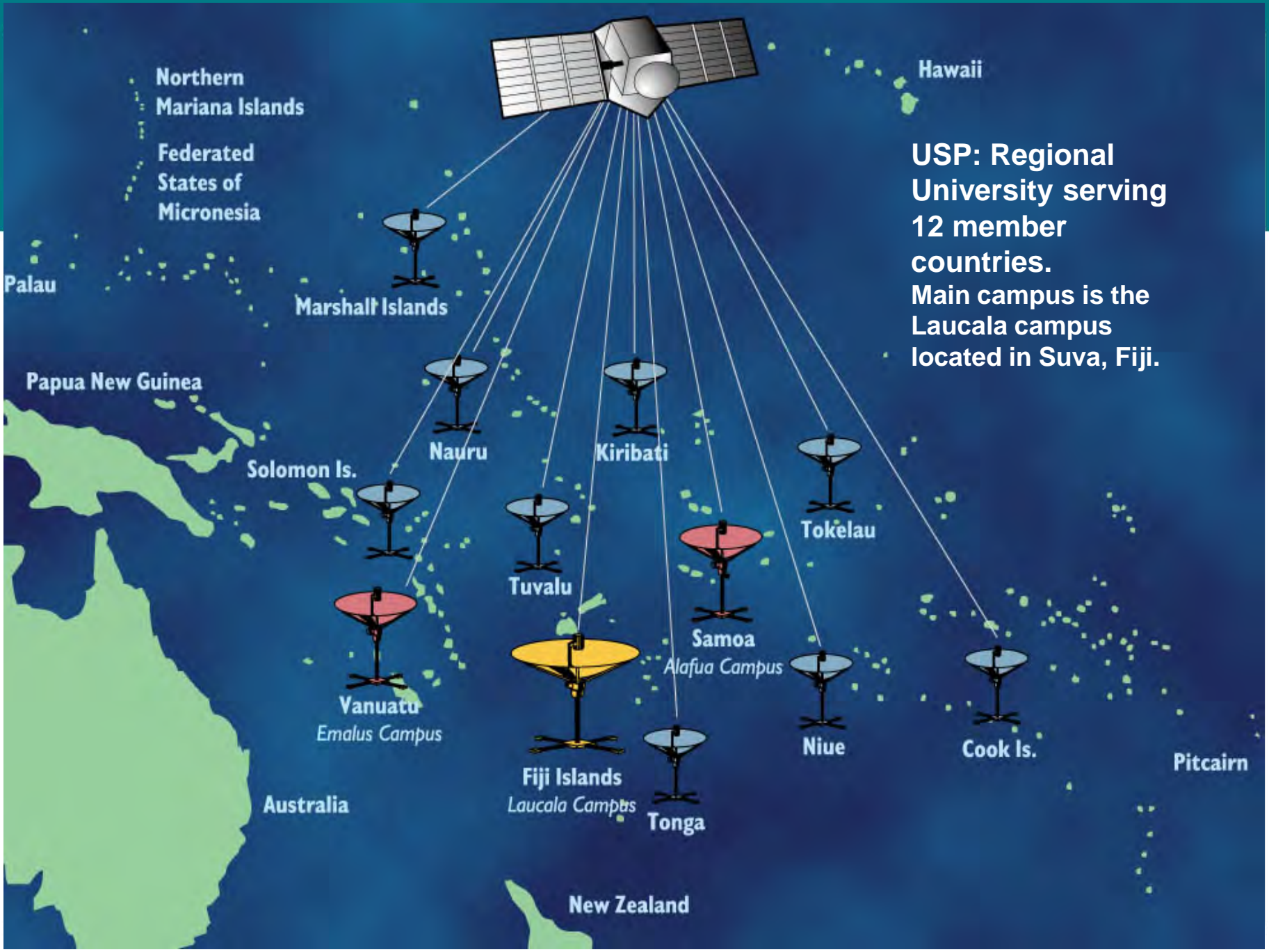
HERDSA 2014

Implementation of the Research Skills Development (RSD) Framework to embed research literacy and skills in undergraduate programmes at The University of the South Pacific

Ms Heena Lal, Dr John Willison, Dr Jito Vanualailai,
Prof John Bythell

Presenter: Ms Heena Lal,
RSD Coordinator,
The University of the South Pacific,
Suva, Fiji Islands





USP: Regional University serving 12 member countries. Main campus is the Laucala campus located in Suva, Fiji.

Northern Mariana Islands
Federated States of Micronesia

Hawaii

Palau

Marshall Islands

Papua New Guinea

Solomon Is.

Nauru

Kiribati

Tokelau

Tuvalu

Samoa
Alafua Campus

Vanuatu
Emalus Campus

Fiji Islands
Laucala Campus

Tonga

Niue

Cook Is.

Australia

Pitcairn

New Zealand

Introduction

The University of the South Pacific (USP) embarked on policy level implementation of the Research Skill Development (RSD) Framework (Willison and O'Regan, 2006) in 2012. [RSDF October 2013](#)

Purpose of RSD Framework for USP:

Build research capacity in the South Pacific region by integrating RSD in all undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes.

Implementation of RSD is part of the curriculum transformation process under the Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) project at USP.

The RSD framework is contextualised to USP higher education in an endeavor to explicitly develop research literacy and skills in a systematic, coherent and progressive manner from first year (100-level) to third year (300-level) undergraduate and on to postgraduate levels.

RSD Implementation Plan

- Implementation of RSD was trialed in the curricula of **first year undergraduate generic courses UU100 'Communication and Information Literacy'** and **UU114 'English for Academic Purposes'** in Semester 1 of 2012. It was seen to work well in these courses.

- A **three year timeline 2013-2015** was then set to progressively implement RSD from first year (100-level) to third year (300-level) undergraduate courses and in core postgraduate courses at USP.

RSD Implementation Plan

Year 2013	Year 2014	Year 2015
Embed RSD in generic UU courses (UU100, UU114, UU200, UU204)		
Introduce RSD in 100-level discipline based courses	Continue to embed RSD in selected 100-level courses	
	Introduce RSD in 200-level discipline based courses	Continue to embed RSD in selected 200-level courses
		Implement and embed RSD in core 300-level courses
Introduce RSD in core postgraduate courses	Continue to introduce and embed RSD in core postgraduate courses	Continue to embed RSD in core postgraduate courses

RSD Implementation Approach

- To implement RSD in at **least one course in every discipline at every level of the undergraduate programmes and at the 400-level in the postgraduate programmes.**
- **An assessment based approach** is used to integrate RSD in course assignments and design of marking rubrics. (RSD based marking rubrics emphasized where feasible; flexible in approach).

Examples: Marking rubrics from UU114 'English for Academic Purposes', [History - HY101](#), [Geography - GE102](#), [Management - MG101](#), [Chemistry - CH101](#) (Others: UU100, UU200, UU204)

RSD Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies



- **Pre-RSD and Post-RSD surveys to gauge students' perceptions** on research, self-assessment of their research literacy and skills, and attitudes to research.

Surveys are carried out in selected disciplines (Chemistry, History, Psychology) to follow the same cohort of students as they engage in RSD from first to third year courses.
(Initial survey was carried out in UU100 and UU114 in 2013).
- **Staff feedback on RSD implementation** (will be shown).
- **Planning to assess assignments in selected third year (300-level) courses** to gauge for differences in student performance before and after RSD implementation.

Staff Feedback on Implementation

Benefits/ Advantages reported:

Explicit articulation of research components and assessment of research literacy and skills in assignments.

- UU204 'Pacific Worlds' was not teaching research skills, now there is a significant emphasis on 'credibility of sources'.
- UU200 'Ethics and Governance': RSD is giving 'more depth and scope to assignments'.
- UU100 'Communication and Information Literacy', History HY101: RSD is making research skills explicit (where these skills were implicit).
Others: AF101, MG101, ED153

Staff Feedback on Implementation

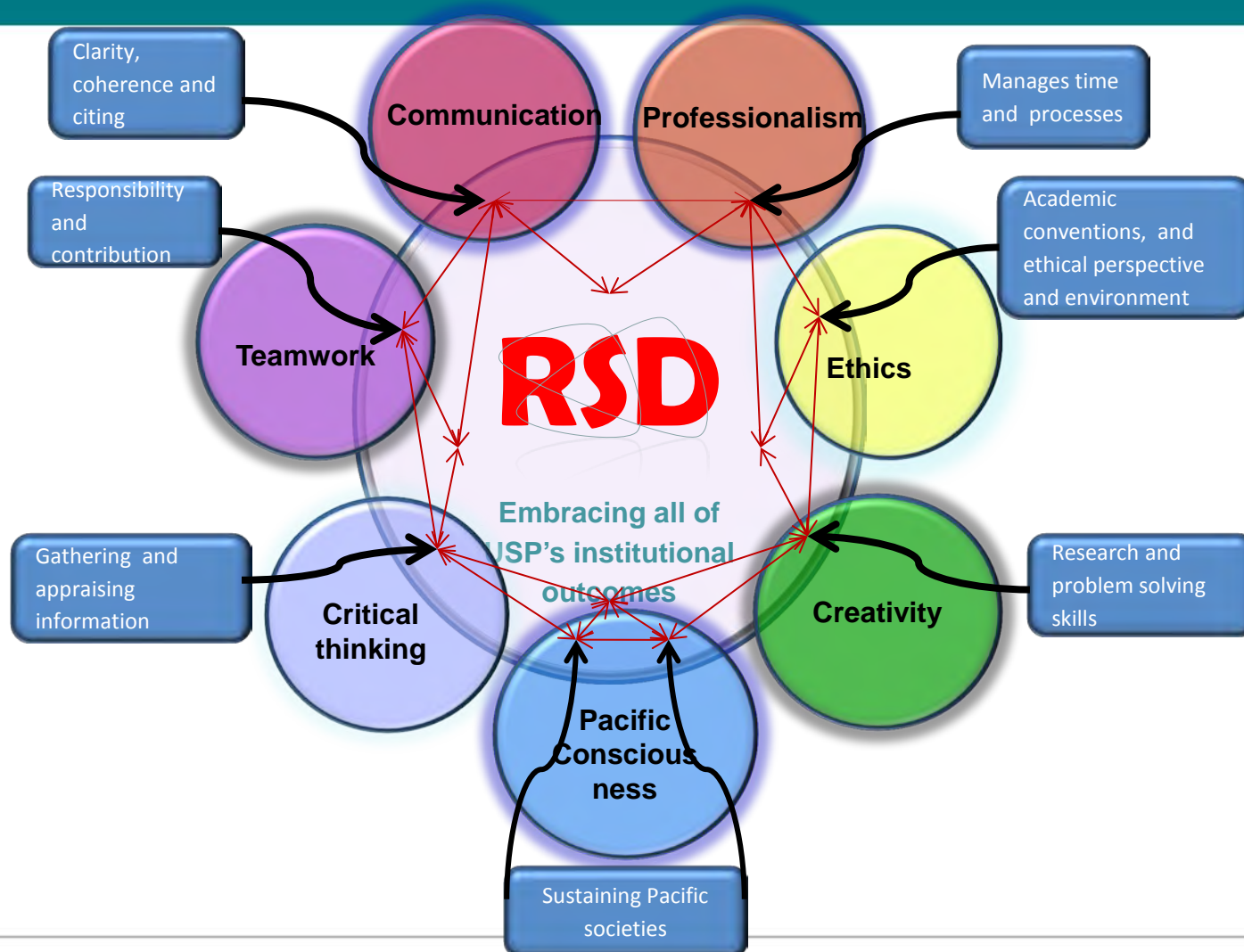
Benefits/ Advantages reported:

RSD based marking rubrics are explicitly communicating assignment expectations to students and markers.

- 'Transparent marking scheme' reported in HY101, UU200, UU204.
- Less student queries on marked assignments reported in Management MG101 and UU100.
- RSD based marking rubric allowed for more systematic and consistent marking in MG101, IS121, UU200. Subsequent reduction in marking time noted in MG101.

Allows for development and assessment of other USP Graduate Outcomes - Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Ethics, Teamwork, Professionalism, and Pacific Consciousness.

RSD and USP Graduate Outcomes



Staff Feedback on Implementation

Challenges reported:

- Unpacking RSD facets to students.
- Design of simple and appropriate marking rubrics that can be comprehended by markers and students.
(Some rubrics are being simplified and fine-tuned over time)
- Increase in student workload per laboratory assignment reported in Chemistry CH101.
- Design of RSD based marking rubrics in courses from certain disciplines: Economics, Mathematics

Conclusion and WAY FORWARD

RSD has been found to benefit a number of courses and disciplines: generic (UU) courses, Chemistry, Education, History, Accounting, Management, Information Systems, and others.

(Project Management strategy commended by STAR Reviewer)

Way Forward

- Review, fine-tune and simplify existing RSD based marking rubrics.
- Look at gradual introduction and focus on different RSD facets in different assignments, with one lab assignment for all facets in CH101.
- To progressively implement RSD in second (200-level) and third year (300-level) undergraduate courses.
- Design of RSD based rubrics in Economics and Mathematics.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of RSD implementation.

www.research.usp.ac.fj/rsd



Questions and Comments



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THANK-YOU!