Leading sustainable improvement in university teaching and learning: Lessons from the sector

Final Report 2012

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Executive summary

Overall, the investigation found that universities that wish to improve the quality of teaching and learning should take an approach that aims to be: collaborative and developmental; embedded; sustainable; and focused on enabling innovation and enhancement.

The seven interlinked insights characteristic of sustainable, positive change in teaching and learning in Australian universities are as follows.

1. **Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning are aligned with the strategic direction of the university**

The evidence indicates that efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning within an institution should be aligned with the strategic direction of the university. While this might seem self evident, the findings indicate that there are sometimes tensions between overall institutional priorities and efforts to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Careful strategic thinking can ensure efforts to enhance teaching and learning provide a means through which universities can enact aspects of their strategic plans.

2. **Senior executives support teaching and learning enhancement, and resources for those improvements are allocated as part of the university's planning and budget cycle**

The study found that embedding and sustaining good teaching and learning practice requires high-level support within an institution. In addition to providing stable representation and championing of teaching and learning, effective support was found to also incorporate institutional investment in the form of funding and resourcing positions and initiatives. It was found that sustainability relies on institutional funding that ensured ongoing impetus for, and successful work in, enhancing teaching and learning.

3. **Staff workload allocations allow time for innovation, enhancement and improvement in teaching and learning**

The project findings indicate that the major factor inhibiting efforts to improve teaching and learning is high staff workloads and the consequent lack of time to engage with, and contribute to, teaching and learning enhancement efforts. This finding mirrors those of several other recent Australian studies of the changing academic profession, although this current project notes the applicability of workload matters to both academic and professional staff. If leaders in Australian universities wish to enhance teaching and learning, fresh thinking, policy and planning is needed around academic and professional staff roles and workload allocation.

4. **Effective leadership proactively manages tensions between discipline research endeavours and efforts to improve teaching and learning**

This research found that a major cultural impediment to enhancing teaching and learning is the privileging of research over teaching and learning within an institution. The findings suggest that effective leadership and management of the tensions that arise between research endeavours and efforts to improve teaching and learning are critical if the latter are to be successful. The findings suggest that the reconciliation of research and teaching and learning can be achieved to some extent through a range of means, including the facilitation of research and scholarship around teaching and learning.

5. **Teaching and learning are supported by relevant research and scholarship conducted within the institution and in collaboration with other institutions and relevant bodies**

The study findings indicate the importance of research and scholarship in the area of teaching and learning. External interface, networking and exchange with stakeholders and bodies outside the institution are critical to ensuring enhancement efforts fit with the broader context in which they are occurring. Some of the benefits of engaging in such research and scholarship were: increased reflection on practice; a heightened awareness of the link between an individual's own teaching and their students' outcomes; increased innovation in teaching; improved morale; enhancing the quality of teaching and learning both within an institution and more broadly; and opportunities to both benchmark and improve teaching performance. The potential for research into teaching and learning to contribute to resolving the tensions between discipline research and teaching and learning was also noted.

6. **A distributed teaching and learning support structure exists within the institution and is coordinated from the centre**

The findings of this research showed that a distributed institutional support structure for teaching and learning enhancement, coordinated from the centre, was perceived to be the most effective approach. Most commonly this involved cooperation between a central teaching and learning centre and one or more of: teaching and learning committees; the associate deans (teaching and learning) or equivalent; educational development and other staff located in the faculties; and a critical mass of people with a commitment to teaching and learning improvement and enhancement who have the capacity to lead.

7. **Mechanisms to recognise excellence in teaching and learning and to enable teaching and learning career pathways are in place**

This study found that professional development, reward and recognition mechanisms and enabling career pathways for those committed to teaching and learning are important components in the successful leadership of teaching and learning enhancement. The project findings indicate the centrality of linking efforts to enhance teaching and learning with promotion opportunities. The research findings indicate that university promotion criteria that incorporate excellence in teaching and learning scholarship and practice allow appropriate recognition, enable the sustainability of excellent practice and help embed enhancement.

List of acronyms used

ADTL	Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council Limited
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DIISRTE	Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
DVCA	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
HERG	Higher Education Research Group
OLT	Office for Learning and Teaching
PEI	Promoting Excellence Initiative
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
PVCL&T	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
PD	Professional Development

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Acknowledgements

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About this project

The Australian Learning and Teaching Council Limited (ALTC) established the Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI) in 2007, inviting all eligible institutions to apply for funding to build and consolidate their capacity to engage constructively with the programs of the ALTC. Forty-two institutions took up this opportunity. The current project, *Leading sustainable change in university teaching and learning: Lessons from the sector* was originally funded under a different title in 2010 through the ALTC Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching program. In 2011, following the closure of the ALTC, oversight of the project as the funding body shifted to the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in the Department of Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE).

Led by a team from Deakin University in partnership with Queensland University of Technology, Murdoch University and Swinburne University of Technology, the project had two main purposes. First, the team sought to distil the key lessons about teaching and learning leadership that have emerged from the sector's engagement with the PEI. In light of a number of subsequent sector-wide changes and with the endorsement of the OLT, this initial purpose was refocussed over the course of the project. The second purpose of providing effective leverage of resources already expended by the ALTC in relation to the PEI was retained.

Focus and refocus of the project

The project commenced in October 2010 with the expectation of the ongoing existence of the ALTC. In January 2011, the Australian Prime Minister announced that the ALTC was to be abolished as part of the funding cut backs to support the Queensland flood relief effort (Gillard, 2011). This unanticipated decision was significant for both the sector and the project.

Four months after this announcement, the Government consolidated its focus on assuring and strengthening the quality of teaching and learning in higher education through its $1.3 billion initiative *Advancing Quality in Higher Education* commitment (DEEWR, 2011). This commitment embraced a range of initiatives including the movement of the major programs of the ALTC into a branch of DEEWR: the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA); the *My University* website; the Structural Adjustment Fund; and three new learning and teaching performance measurement tools. This change sees TEQSA begin its regulatory functions in early 2012, making it explicit that universities now more than ever before have greater accountability for student learning outcomes and teaching quality.

Also in 2010, the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative was rolled out, with a second ERA round planned for 2012. This has heightened both the emphasis on research within universities and the historical tensions inherent in universities conferring more status and reward on research achievements than on those related to teaching and learning (Chalmers, 2011).

To ensure the relevance of project outcomes and deliverables in this new context, the project has concentrated on identifying and documenting the successful leadership and embedded, systemic approaches that have been deployed through the PEI to enhance learning and teaching in a sustainable way. The objective of the refocused project has been to determine the major leadership lessons that have been learned across the sector through the PEI that are likely to be applicable in Australian universities in the future. Seven major lessons have been extracted from a range of data and evidence gathered and these are outlined in detail in this report.

Project outcomes are reported with a number of key stakeholder groups in mind, specifically: the OLT in DEEWR; senior university leaders and policy makers; teaching and learning centres; faculty teaching and learning leaders; and state and other learning and teaching networks.

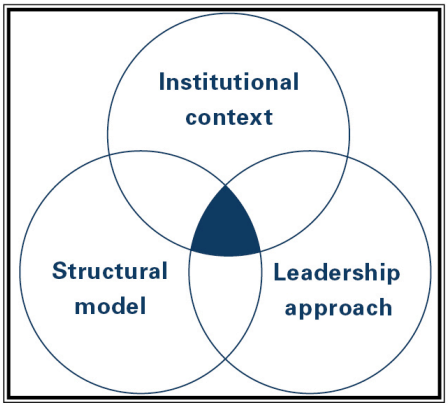
This report and its companion summary, *Seven insights for leading sustainable change in learning and teaching in Australian universities,* provide guidance to support leaders in consolidating a systemic approach to improving the quality of learning and teaching within an institution. This guidance is informed by the work of Scott *et al*. (2008), which acknowledges that for universities to remain viable, they 'must build their capacity to respond promptly, positively and wisely to … [a] combination of change forces' [Scott *et al.* 2008, p.vi; see also Fullan (1993) and Fullan (2003)]. The advice in this report is also informed by the work of Fullan (2011) who notes that '... effective leaders use practice as their fertile ground … they try to figure out what's working' (p. xii) and base their leadership practice on this. Fullan (2011) argues further that '… most good ideas come from first examining good practices of others …' (p. 5).

The project team recognises that within Australian higher education there are many variances and differences in terms of institutional context. The guidance provided through this project acknowledges that leadership for sustainable improvement in the quality of teaching and learning needs to be anchored and interconnected in the context in which it occurs:

> *… the effectiveness of leaders depends, more than is generally realized, on the context around them. Over time, the leader's capability is shaped by the top team's quality, and by the capabilities of the full organization. These can either provide invaluable support for the changes a leader wants to make or render those changes impossible. Hence the best leaders pay a great deal of attention to the design of the elements around them: They articulate a lucid sense of purpose, create effective leadership teams, prioritize and sequence their initiatives carefully, redesign organizational structures to make good execution easier, and, most importantly, integrate all these tactics into one coherent strategy.* (Wheeler *et al.* 2007, p. 1)

The project was initially conceptualised by a three-component framework. Figure 1 depicts this overarching framework, which informed the initial conceptualisation of the project. This framework provided a useful platform for shaping the project methodology in terms of the major environmental factors perceived to be impacting on institutional PEI projects and their leadership.

Figure 1: Major factors impacting leadership in the promotion of excellence in teaching and learning



The sector-wide changes described above and the research findings as outlined in Section 3 *Findings* have seen a broadening of this initial conceptual work to focus on the elements of the systemic approach necessary to enhance learning and teaching. Consequently some adjustments were made to the intended deliverables as originally identified in the project proposal. Table 1 provides a summary of the intended project deliverables, the refocused deliverables and the rationale for the changes made.

Table 1: Intended deliverables, refocused deliverables, rationale for change

Intended deliverables	Refocused deliverables	Rationale for change
A discussion paper detailing common themes in project and evaluation reports.	*Modified* A summary paper was developed and disseminated to each Australian university.	A summary paper was determined to be a more effective interim dissemination strategy.
A consolidation report of planned and implemented PEIs.	This aspect of the project was not developed.	A retrospective overview of planned and implemented PEIs was viewed as offering little value in the new context.
An interview report on the challenges of implementation with reference to policy, structural location and leadership of PEIs.	*Maintained* An internal interview report was developed to synthesise interview data and inform project findings.	N/A
A survey report identifying the impacts of the PEIs on staff and students.	*Maintained* An internal survey report was developed to synthesise survey data and inform project findings.	N/A
A repository of exemplars of successful engagement with ALTC objectives through PEIs.	*Modified* Examples of good practice have informed the seven insights for leading sustainable change in teaching and learning.	A retrospective collation of the implementation of PEIs was viewed as offering little added value in the new context.
Advice on successful structural models that evidence shows have maximised engagement with the ALTC objectives and that will be sustainable.	*Maintained* Data on structural models have informed the seven insights for leading sustainable change in teaching and learning.	N/A
Advice on successful leadership approaches that evidence shows have maximised engagement with the ALTC objectives.	*Maintained* Data on successful leadership approaches have informed the seven insights for leading sustainable change in teaching and learning.	N/A
Advice on leadership capacity building based on successful models and leadership.	This aspect of the project was not developed.	Leadership capacity building *per se* did not emerge as a key theme in the data sets and in light of this, has not been directly reported on.

Theoretical underpinnings of the project

This project took the theoretical view that successful leadership of the enhancement of teaching and learning within universities is contingent on the context, environment and circumstances in which it occurs. That is, a contingency theory of leadership was adopted. Higher education institutions vary enormously. Distributed leadership frameworks are the norm in most institutions and negotiating pathways through these networks within various contexts requires leadership approaches that are innovative and relevant to those contexts.

As Marshall (2006) explains:

> *Recognition that '(a) different circumstances require different patterns of behaviour (or qualities) for a leader to be effective; (b) that a dynamic interaction between leader and context will shape the nature of leadership … [and] (c) that context and circumstances place different demands, constraints and choices on leaders' (Middlehurst, 1993, p. 20) lies at the heart of the so-called 'contingency theories' of leadership first espoused by Fiedler (1967), Vroom and Yetton (1973) and Hersey and Blanchard (1988)* (p. 2).

Thus, as Marshall (2006) notes, building leadership capacity from a contingency perspective '… is as much a process of developing the organisation as it is one of developing the professional knowledge and skills of those called to leadership positions' (p. 3).
The findings of this research project focus in the main on organisational development aspects of leadership, with the professional development of individual leaders as part of that broader development. The project focused on multi-level leadership as hallmarks of successfully embedded and scaled-up innovation projects (Southwell *et al.* 2005).

The use of a contingency theory of leadership to explore outcomes of efforts to enhance teaching and learning recognises that while universities operate within the Australian higher education framework, each university context is unique as a consequence of the way in which it interprets government policy, allocates resources and determines the emphasis given to enhancing teaching and learning. The insights and guidance drawn from the findings of the project are deliberately not specific to particular contexts. Instead, they have been designed to be considered and adapted with a wide range of contexts and variables at play.

Work on higher education leadership by Fullan and Scott (2009) and Scott *et al.* (2008) highlights the enormous complexity of the role of leaders in teaching and learning and of the contexts in which they operate. These authors point to the impacts of:

- the IT revolution and the related changes in student expectations and the opportunities for changes to learning;
- widening participation movements and the resultant challenges in managing the transition to university of students who are in the first generation of their family to attend university;
- changes to university funding arrangements including increased expectations of revenue generation;
- rapid growth and increased competition in the higher education market;
- increases in user pay expectations for those who attend university and the impact of paid work on attendance and engagement;
- increased student diversity; and
- the increasing focus on standards.

The impending impacts of the aging academic workforce are also important to note. The report of the 2008 review of higher education by Denise Bradley and colleagues (Bradley *et al.* 2008) acknowledges that we must address 'Australia's looming shortage of academics' (p. xvi) as the 'baby boomer' generation progressively retires in considerable numbers over the next decade, presenting a significant senior leadership succession challenge for Australian higher education. Adequate support for a new generation of change leaders will require understanding that effective leadership of teaching and learning enhancement requires a nuanced understanding of the interconnected and multiple aspects of such leadership.

All of these factors impact on and influence university leadership. Fullan and Scott (2009) note both the external and internal contexts:

> *… the culture of the university or college (how we do things around here) needs to enable it to constructively, collaboratively, and productively negotiate the volatile operating environment it now faces. At the same time, the institution's structure and operating systems need to be agile, supportive and efficient. This is important because it gives university staff room to change, learn and lead.* (pp. 74–75).

Leaders in higher education teaching and learning often have performance indicators and measures that require informal authority and persuasive power and influence.

In the November 2011 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, colloquially known as 'the mini-budget', the Australian government announced a reduction of $640 million to higher education funding. In 2012, the sector enters a demand-driven system. In such a context, it is critical to the quality of teaching and learning that 'what works' in higher education leadership of teaching and learning enhancement is highlighted and widely understood.

The current project focused on the teaching and learning leadership lessons that could be learnt from a nation-wide initiative funded by the ALTC. The project outcomes were guided by the assumption that good practice, in both teaching and learning *per se* and also in the leadership of teaching and learning, should be shared to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'. It is hoped that the outcomes of the current project will be helpful for Australian higher education in the context of shrinking resources, increasing complexity and leadership succession challenges.

The deliverables

Scott *et al.* (2008) note that work over the past 20 years in Australia, Scandinavia, South Africa, New Zealand, Oman and Canada '… has repeatedly revealed that what our learning and teaching leaders want are practical, higher education specific and role-specific insights into what would be the best approach in taking 'good ideas' and making them work in ways that benefit both students and the university's "bottom line"' (p. vii). The deliverables of this current project aim to provide a contribution to those insights.

This project has produced three deliverables:

1. A summary paper

Nagy, J., Devlin, M., Brooker, M., Smeal, G., Cummings, R., Mazzolini, M., and Lyubomirsky, A. (2011). *ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative: Major themes identified in completed institutional project reports*. Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Sydney, Australia. ISBN: 978-1-921856-58-7.

2. A short guide for university leaders

Devlin, M., Smeal, G., Cummings, R. and Mazzolini, M. (2012). *Seven insights for leading sustainable change in teaching and learning in Australian universities*. Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Sydney, Australia. ISBN: 978-0-642-78243-4
available from <http://www.olt.gov.au>

3. A full report on the project and its findings

Devlin, M., Smeal, G., Cummings, R. and Mazzolini, M. (2012). *Leading sustainable improvement in university teaching and learning: Lessons from the sector.* Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Sydney, Australia. ISBN 978-1-921916-55-7

Project method

This project collected data using a mixed method research approach that has a long history in the social and behavioural sciences (Silverman, 2006), combining qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach allowed the project team to combine different sources of data collection and compare results from each while also drawing on the diverse and relevant expertise of each member of the team. The use of triangulation between data sources helped to reduce the deficiencies and biases of each of the individual methods and improved the reliability and validity of the findings (Blaikie, 1991); Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). The approach also facilitated a deep and rich explanation of the elements of effective leadership of teaching and learning enhancement across a wide range of Australian universities.

Data for the project was collected from three major sources:

1. A thematic analysis of final and evaluation reports on the Promoting Excellence Initiative from a representative sample of 18 Australian universities;
2. Interviews with 24 key teaching and learning leaders and staff from a representative sample of 10 Australian universities; and
3. An online survey of 88 teaching and learning leaders and practitioners at the four partner universities involved in the study.

Some universities were represented in more than one major data source. A total of 22 Australian universities were involved in providing data for this project. These represented universities in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and South Australia. The sample included representation from the Australian Technology Network, the Group of Eight, dual sector universities, regional universities, unaligned universities and post-Dawkins universities.

In addition, a workshop activity at a national forum of PEI stakeholders sought feedback on preliminary findings. The individual and collective expertise of the project team members was also used to inform data gathering and to interpret the findings. The reference group was consulted throughout the project.

The methodology is described in detail in Appendix 1. The methodology received ethics approval from the Deakin University Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG [AE]11-28) and subsequently from the partner universities.

Findings

The findings from this national investigation of leadership of efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in institutions are presented below, under seven major headings. Some additional findings and commentary are provided as well.

Overall, the investigation found that universities that wish to improve the quality of teaching and learning should implement an institution-wide approach that aims to be:

- collaborative and developmental;
- embedded;
- sustainable; and
- focused on enabling innovation and enhancement.

The interlinked insights that this investigation found are that:

1. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning are aligned with the strategic direction of the university;
2. Senior executives support teaching and learning enhancement, and resources for those improvements are allocated as part of the university's planning and budget cycle;
3. Staff workload allocations allow time for innovation, enhancement and improvement in teaching and learning;
4. Effective institutional leadership proactively manages tensions between discipline research endeavours and efforts to improve teaching and learning;
5. Teaching and learning are supported by relevant research and scholarship conducted within the institution and in collaboration with other institutions and relevant bodies;
6. A distributed teaching and learning support structure exists within the institution and is coordinated from the centre; and
7. Mechanisms to recognise excellence in teaching and learning and to enable teaching and learning career pathways are in place.

1. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning are aligned with the strategic direction of the university

The evidence gathered as part of this project indicates that efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning within an institution should be aligned with the strategic direction of the university.

Final and evaluation reports clearly indicate that efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning worked most effectively within an institution when there was alignment between these efforts and the strategic directions of the university. As the summary paper says:

> *The majority of reports analysed indicated that the intended outcomes of PEI projects worked alongside or contributed to the institutional priorities or strategic direction of their university in some way. Some universities deliberately aligned their PEI with the strategic plans of their institution. Those that did so reported that this led to …*
>
> - *sustainability through embedding the PEI into systemic, evolving structures, processes and strategies;*
> - *… momentum [being given] to curriculum, teaching … [and] learning improvement and cultural change; and*
> - *[the] engagement of senior staff.* (Nagy *et al.* 2011, p. 4).

As the summary paper notes, the PEI provided a means through which universities could enact aspects of their strategic plans. Specific examples given included advancing work integrated learning (WIL) and internationalisation. Other more generic examples given included increased opportunities to make contributions through representation on committees and working groups related to curriculum renewal and involvement with institutional priority programs in relation to scholarship.

Some of the interviews with institutional leaders highlighted the challenges when the alignment between the strategic priorities of the institution and efforts to improve teaching and learning was poor. As one project leader explained:

> *I was situated in the DVCA [area], in the actual office or the floor where the DVCA is, when I first started working with teachers on awards and grants, and that was not conducive to much development, because the DVCA at that time was more concerned about bums on seats, budgets, they were very operationally concerned rather than a strategy – there wasn't a lot of strategic thinking. [03-DH-B-1]*

While strategy formation is important, as Fullan and Scott (2009) note, operational elements are critical. The next six insights focus on operational aspects of leading the enhancement of teaching and learning in universities.

2. Senior executives support teaching and learning enhancement, and resources for those improvements are allocated as part of the university's planning and budget cycle

The second insight that this project found was that senior executive support of efforts to enhance teaching and learning, including through the provision of requisite funding to resource relevant positions and initiatives, would assist universities to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The examination of final and evaluation reports found that the PEI worked most effectively within an institution when high-level leadership was evident. As stated in the summary paper, 'Nine (50 per cent) final … reports and three (23 per cent) evaluation reports [from different institutions] made reference to the impact of executive portfolio involvement in the PEI' (Nagy *et al*. 2011, p. 4).

As explained in the summary paper, some final reports indicated that the involvement of a member of the executive had been critical to the success of their initiative because such involvement highlighted:

- the high status and prestige of ALTC initiatives;
- the value of teaching and learning in higher education and within the institution; and
- the importance of teaching excellence in career advancement.

The summary paper also noted that senior executive involvement provided:

- valuable leadership;
- contributions to increased stability and sustainability of enhancement endeavours;
- assistance with ensuring the embedding of relevant policies; and
- support for strategic change around the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Importantly, the involvement of other senior members of staff ensured that these key institutional decision makers were aware of what was happening across the institution in terms of efforts to enhance teaching and learning.

Institutional investment in terms of funding initiatives designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning was also noted as key in the summary paper. This finding is not surprising and was supported in the interviews. As one interviewee who was a member of a PEI project team stated succinctly:

> *… when the funding stopped my involvement stopped … [29-MB-C-1a]*

and as another senior leader interviewee asked, somewhat poignantly:

> *… when the money stops, how do we keep things going? [04-DH-A-2]*

As the summary paper details, efforts to enhance teaching and learning also worked most effectively when there was additional institutional investment into these efforts. Close to half (44 per cent) of the final reports examined and close to one-quarter of the evaluation reports (23 per cent) made reference to the provision of institutional funding support in addition to the funds provided by the ALTC. As reported, this sort of demonstrable commitment by an institution sends a clear message of the value the university places on teaching and learning.

All four of the very senior leaders interviewed for the project indicated that there was senior executive support in their institution for teaching and learning enhancement efforts. A typical comment that indicated the support incorporated the funding necessary to undertake the requisite work was:

> *Definitely had support and the way that you see in practice is that now that the PEI money is finished, the university's still providing the money for those positions and in fact at [name of university], it's two positions, not one. [42-DH-A-2]*

Nine out of 14 (64 per cent) of project leader interviewees said that they had had senior executive support. Comments included:

> *Yeah, no question about it. Very strong support before the PEI for ALTC engagement and then the project strengthened and kind of 'greased the wheels' a little more. [39-GS-B-1b]*

> *I feel incredibly blessed that we have had support from above and that support has made … disseminating and spreading the word so much easier. And the support has been in so many different ways that it's understood that it's genuine. It's just not a token support because this is, there's this money there and therefore we should do it. So I'm constantly feeling that we're in a lucky space. [20-RC-B-1]*

Five of the six team member interviewees (83 per cent) also said they had experienced executive support in their institution. A typical comment was:

> *Yeah. I mean, the VC's always been committed. The VC's on the [ALTC] Board …so that's a pretty strong engagement, and so it's already been in his consciousness for a long time, so he strongly supported university resources to add to the ALTC resources, and he's supported us all the way. [07-GS-C-1]*

Three of the 14 project leaders interviewed and one of the six team member interviewees said there was some limited executive support. Comments typically related to the existence of verbal support but the absence of funding:

> *I would say there was broad support, but that didn't always translate, or it didn't translate quickly enough for me obviously, into actual support. [42-DH-B-1]*

Leaders at various levels were asked in interviews about how they believed initiatives could be sustained. Interviewees at all three levels commented on the necessity for funding to ensure sustainability. Project leaders commented on the importance of funding for maintaining momentum and for sustainability:

> *… what I would like to see is that we don't, as an institution … lose the impetus that we have had via these ALTC initiatives. [04-DH-B-1]*

> *One [way] would be funding my position. I think that's a big step because without my position … it would be much more just sort of an administrative thing as far as somebody making sure their applications are submitted in time and checking them or whatever. But I'm actively out there helping people and so forth … [29-MB-B-2]*

> *… as long as there is money for research and money for awards offered by some national body, we have a role … and it will be crucial to this university and we will be supported. Take that away, who knows what happens? [20-RC-B-1]*

Those closer to the coalface were more direct about the importance of funding. As one project team member explained:

> *Well I suppose the sustainability comes from funding and you know that's a leadership thing. The Provost always makes sure there is money for the university grants, learning and teaching grants, and if we didn't have money for that then we wouldn't – it would just keel over. [15-AL-C-1]*

Dedicated position(s)

Many of the data collection methods used in this project asked about the ways in which gains made via the PEI and greater engagement with the ALTC in terms of the enhancement of teaching and learning might be sustained. One clear feature that emerged in each data set was the presence of a dedicated position, or a number of dedicated positions, to work with ALTC grant, award and citation applicants.

As the summary paper notes, six final reports (33 per cent) and eight evaluation reports (62 per cent) referred to the high quality one-on-one support provided by PEI or teaching and learning personnel in support of ALTC grant applicants and award nominees. Assistance included: brainstorming an idea; critical advice at the early stages of developing an application; help interpreting ALTC guidelines; budgeting, evaluation and dissemination advice; assistance with technical aspects of completing the application; providing feedback and advice to applicants and nominees and fine-tuning proposals and nominations; development of teaching and learning portfolios; connecting academics with colleagues; and the provision of project management support as required.

Six institutional reports referred to the 'excellent' quality of the support and assistance received from staff in dedicated positions and its constructive nature. The outcome of such high level support for ALTC applicants and nominees included not only the submission of higher quality applications but also increased interest in the ALTC across the university and nurturing quality teaching and learning.

Three of the four senior leaders interviewed referred to the value of having a dedicated position, whether funded externally or internally. Two of the four said:

> *… [we] definitely had support and the way that you see in practice is that now that the PEI money is finished, the university's still providing the money for those positions and in fact at [name of university], it's two positions, not one. [42-DH-A-2]*

> *Dr [name of staff member], who'd been with us since 2006 roughly, was very much a scholar around the scholarship of teaching, and really did this institution well to raise the profile of the scholarship of teaching and learning in relation to grants and awards. [04-DHA-2]*

A project team member interviewee also noted the value of these dedicated support positions:

> *I think it was enabling. We did a couple of staff surveys two years apart, which both indicated that people valued having a person … they knew that they could turn to for guidance about ALTC matters. [05-DH-C-1]*

3. Staff workload allocations allow time for innovation, enhancement and improvement in teaching and learning

This project found that the major factor inhibiting efforts to improve teaching and learning in Australian universities was high staff workloads and the consequential lack of time to engage with, and contribute to, teaching and learning enhancement efforts.

When survey participants were asked, '*What factors do you believe have inhibited staff in your institution from engagement with ALTC programs?'* the two most frequent responses were 'time' and 'workload'. As Table 2 shows, almost three-quarters of the 88 staff surveyed held the view that a lack of time had inhibited engagement with teaching and learning enhancement and over 85 per cent believed that workload was a factor in limiting engagement. In institutions 3 and 2, almost 94 per cent and 96 per cent of those surveyed, respectively, indicated a view that staff workloads were prohibitive in terms of engagement with teaching and learning enhancement efforts.

Table 2: Factors that have inhibited staff engagement

Factor	Institution 1 (N=24)	Institution 2 (N=23)	Institution 3 (N=34)	Institution 4 (N=7)	Overall (N=88)
Time	57.1	86.4	72.7	85.7	73.5
Workload	66.7	95.5	93.9	85.7	86.7

NB: Per cent of responses for each institution and factor are shown

When survey respondents were asked to '*list up to three challenges that have been experienced within your institution or by you personally with regard to ALTC opportunities*', there were 155 responses coded. As Table 3 shows, the most frequent response was 'time/resources' and 'workload' was equal third in terms of frequency.

Table 3: Challenges to engaging with ALTC opportunities

Challenges	Number of responses (N=155)	Per cent of respondents who identified this challenge
Time/Resources	20	13
Individuals (perceptions/motivation/valuing)	20	13
Institution/Structure	18	12
Workload	16	10
Dissemination	16	10

These survey responses came from staff who had been identified by members of the project team as people who would have knowledge of activities and efforts designed to enhance teaching and learning generally. These colleagues included those who had been recognised for outstanding teaching, those who worked in educational and academic development roles, those who had teaching leadership roles and those who served on teaching and learning committees and the like. That these responses about the prohibitive effects of a lack of time and of high staff workloads came from such staff is noteworthy, as these staff would have first-hand knowledge of the barriers to teaching and learning enhancement.

When the responses to the interview questions about the challenges to implementation are examined, the most frequent response from project leaders interviewed related to staff workload. All 14 project leaders interviewed mentioned 'workload' and/or 'lack of staff time' as challenges to implementing the activities and initiatives related to enhancing teaching and learning. Illustrative comments include:

> *… you couldn't get much buy-in because while they were really enthusiastic about improving their own teaching, and helping others close to them in their own schools, they were just too committed to so many other raft of activities. [03-DH-B-1]*

> *… certainly when I spoke to my equivalents in other universities; I mean they were struggling given their size. They were struggling to manage and do all the things that were required over and above everything else that they were doing within their commitments. [04-DH-B-1]*

> *I guess the second challenge was that people have competing demands on their time and there were certainly times when we felt like we were harping on about the ALTC when people actually were worried about other things … [including] high teaching loads, the demands of developing new programs, that kind of thing. So making it possible for people to juggle their work I guess was another challenge. [39-GS-B-1b]*

All six of the project team members interviewed for the project offered 'workload' and/or 'lack of time' as the major factor(s) inhibiting implementation. One illustrative quote was:

> *There's a lot of good practice there and there's a lot of good material, but there's only a limited time people have in actually using that material, or even wading through it to find out what is actually useful. I think that's the problem with education: you're always flooded with things. [29-MB-C-1a]*

This finding in relation to workload mirrors several other recent findings from Australian studies of the changing academic profession. We note that some of the issues raised in other research (see for example: Coates *et al.* 2009) apply both to professional and academic staff, who have both experienced significant changes in expectations around their work. Coates *et al.* (2009) recommend the expansion of staff numbers, streamlining accountability requirements, embracing institutional mission diversity, and building institutional leadership capacity, among other suggestions. While this current project did not specifically seek resolutions to the dilemmas or issues that arose in the data, it was clear that in relation to workload, some urgent action is necessary both at institutional levels and across the higher education sector in Australia. If leaders in Australian universities wish to enhance teaching and learning, fresh thinking, policy and planning is needed around academic and professional staff roles and workload allocation.

4. Effective institutional leadership proactively manages tensions between discipline research endeavours and efforts to improve teaching and learning

The fourth insight that this project found was that effective leadership and management of the tensions between discipline research on the one hand and teaching and learning on the other would assist universities to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The findings indicated the potential of unresolved tension between these two major functions to hinder efforts to improve teaching and learning. The project also noted the subsequent need to manage the tensions carefully to minimise their negative impact.

The examination of final and evaluation reports found that the PEI worked most effectively within an institution when challenges inherent in the culture of an institution were well led and managed. As the summary paper explained, one of the challenges that institutions had to grapple with when trying to promote excellence in teaching and learning was the difference in prestige between research and teaching and learning and the impact of this difference on enhancement of the latter.

The project found that a significant impediment to enhancing teaching and learning was the privileging of research over teaching within Australian institutions. As outlined in the summary paper, close to half of the final reports (44 per cent) and of the evaluation reports (46 per cent) documented the challenges inherent in research having higher status than teaching within their institutional context. For example, three outlined the impacts of the long-standing research-intensive culture of their universities on the willingness of faculties and staff to engage with endeavours to enhance teaching and learning. Two universities commented on the potential of the absence of Category 1 research grant status for ALTC grants to discourage individuals, departments and institutions from engaging in teaching-related research and development.

In the survey of partner institutions, participants were asked, *'What factors do you believe have inhibited staff in your institution from engagement with ALTC programs?'* As Table 4 shows, more than half of the 88 staff who responded to the survey indicated that the fact that their institution believed research to be more important than teaching was an inhibitor. Institutional responses ranged from a low of just under 30 per cent (institution 4) to a high of almost 70 per cent (institution 3). Almost 40 per cent of the 88 respondents indicated that 'university research priorities' had inhibited engagement with teaching and learning agendas. Within the four institutions represented in the survey, the percentage of respondents who agreed research priorities hindered engagement with teaching and learning enhancement ranged from a low of 23 (institution 2) to a high of 52 for institution 4.

Table 4: Factors that inhibit staff engagement with teaching and learning

Factor	Institution 1 (N=24)	Institution 2 (N=23)	Institution 3 (N=34)	Institution 4 (N=7)	Overall (N=88)
Institutional view that research more important than teaching	61.9	31.8	69.7	28.6	54.2
University research priorities	38.1	22.7	51.5	28.6	38.6

NB: Per cent of responses for each institution and factor are shown

Suggestions around managing this challenge included universities making the decision to count ALTC grants as Category 2 income as is the case in some institutions, but not all. There was also the suggestion that the research offices in all institutions should give pedagogical research funded by the ALTC the kind of support they offered to other research grants – such support for ALTC grants is currently offered in some, but not all, Australian universities. This support includes that provided during the application process, support in compliance and submission of applications and financial management support once funds arrive for successful applications. Finally, future PEI-like initiatives to assist research-oriented universities to continue to give teaching and learning greater attention were recommended.

While the current project did not specifically seek data on how the tension between research and efforts to improve teaching and learning might be resolved, one senior level leader interviewed indicated one possible path to the reconciliation of the tension:

> *… people are seeing learning and teaching as legitimate scholarly activity that they can do as an academic, because they get external grants and they get external awards for that, because within, you know; within the academic world, getting external recognition and grants are two of the key things that you need. And it's good that that is associated with learning and teaching and not just with research. [42-DH-A-2]*

The project also noted research into, and the scholarship of, teaching and learning as a key element of an effective approach to enhancing teaching and learning. This, too, might contribute to the resolution of the tensions between research and teaching and learning. This element of an effective approach to teaching and learning leadership is discussed next.

5. Teaching and learning are supported by relevant research and scholarship conducted within the institution and in collaboration with other institutions and relevant bodies

Research into, and the scholarship of, teaching and learning are enjoying increased attention in Australian higher education, as evidenced in the data collected for this project.

As the summary paper outlines, around half of the reports examined mentioned a heightened focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Nine PEI final reports (50 per cent) and six evaluation reports (46 per cent) referred to increased scholarship of teaching and learning within their university context and among academic staff. Eleven reports referred to the individual benefits for teachers resulting from increased scholarly activities. These included: increased reflection on practice; a heightened awareness of the link between an individual's own teaching and their students' outcomes; increased innovation in teaching; improved morale; and improved teaching performance.

The project also confirmed that teaching and learning enhancement does not happen in an institutional vacuum. External interface, networking and exchange with stakeholders and bodies outside the institution are critical to ensuring enhancement efforts fit with the broader context in which they are occurring. Such exchange also ensures the appropriate partnerships are in place to share one's innovations, to learn from the experiences and knowledge of others and to benchmark performance. As Fullan and Scott (2009) note, universities should not only draw upon existing performance and trend data in making leadership decisions '… but also on strategic intelligence gathered through research, targeted networking, and benchmarking with institutions that have similar missions, both locally and overseas' (p. 84).

Unsurprisingly, the schools and faculties that had experienced success in ALTC grants and/or awards were most open to the idea of research or scholarship in teaching and learning.

When asked about the primary institutional vehicles for disseminating information to staff about ALTC opportunities, scholarly networks and scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) conferences were mentioned by 33 per cent and 17 per cent of survey respondents, respectively. The figures for each university are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Primary vehicles for disseminating ALTC opportunity information

Factor	Institution 1 (N=24)	Institution 2 (N=23)	Institution 3 (N=34)	Institution 4 (N=7)	Overall (N=88)
Scholarly networks	45.8	13.0	23.5	85.7	33.0
SoTL conferences	37.5	39.1	14.7	14.3	17.0

NB: Per cent of responses for each institution and factor are shown

When asked what strategies had been used to disseminate reports/outcomes from ALTC grants, survey participants noted various forms of scholarship. Table 6 shows the responses to this question that relate to scholarship.

While not explicitly stated in any of the data collected for the project, it is clear that involvement with the ALTC programs represented scholarship and/or research into teaching and learning. Both sets of activities have myriad benefits in terms of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning both within an institution and more broadly.

Table 6: Strategies that have been used to disseminate outcomes from grants

Factor	Institution 1 (N=24)	Institution 2 (N=23)	Institution 3 (N=34)	Institution 4 (N=7)	Overall (N=88)
Showcasing winners	77.3	65.2	88.2	57.1	76.7
ALTC forums, events	54.5	56.5	76.5	42.9	62.8
SoTL conferences	63.6	34.8	26.5	0.0	36.0

NB: Per cent of responses for each institution and factor are shown

The scholarship of teaching and learning is often, although not always, undertaken within a community of practice. Eight PEI final reports (44 per cent) and four evaluation reports (31 per cent) referred to the establishment of communities of practice within their institutions. Wenger (1998) suggests that communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Final reports indicated that some communities of practice around research and/or scholarship in teaching and learning were planned whereas others emerged.

The scholarly communities served many purposes, including:

- the development of networks of teaching and learning leaders within and outside the university;
- encouraging collaboration, exchange and engagement around teaching and learning;
- connecting and building relationships, and developing partnerships in schools, faculties, and across the university;
- leveraging of the expertise of the ADTLs, particularly in the area of peer mentoring;
- drawing together academic and professional staff from across the institution to work together on enhancing teaching and learning.

The findings show clearly that scholarly networks and communities of practice were an important part of institutional, and broader, approaches that aimed to enhance teaching and learning. Research and scholarship was evident not only within but also across institutions and in collaboration with external agencies.

Eleven PEI final reports (61 per cent) and one evaluation report (8 per cent) referred to the development of cross-institutional networks among PEI coordinators. Institutional reports identified the following benefits of cross-institutional participation in such networks:

- the opportunity to share and learn about successful strategies;
- the opportunity to share resources;
- the development of a community of scholarship;
- the enabling of benchmarking processes; and
- collaboration on proposals for funding and/or projects.

One project team member summed up many of the benefits of external networks:

> *... we found that it was really helpful getting ideas, cross fertilisation from other universities. At the beginning there were some concerns around because we're Sydney based and there's this sense of maybe at one point being in competition with one another but when it comes to it and we've seen this, like you can't take somebody's idea and just propagate it in your own backyard. It doesn't work. You can listen to what people are doing and think, you know, we could adapt or could use it so really you're kind of cross pollinating to make it work in your particular context. [15-AL-C-1]*

One way in which ideas were shared was through visiting scholars between institutions. As one team leader explained:

> *[The] PEI … has really … opened up universities to that kind of collaboration that it's much easier these days and much more often you'd pick up a phone and say, 'Can I tempt you to come and visit my institution and do X?' which is most helpful for our institution because we're not constantly relying on the internal people, we draw in people from outside as well. [39-GS-B-1a]*

Two institutional reports referred to visits by external scholars who served to amplify the importance of teaching and learning at key university committees in the university, and engage senior staff with national teaching and learning agendas. Such visits were perceived as having an impact on school/department perspectives and planning. Two reports discussed the involvement of high-level faculty and senior education leaders in the review and ranking of citation nominations. This involvement was believed to have kept the ALTC on the radar of key university decision-makers.

When asked about how initiatives and gains made through the PEI might be sustained, one of the four senior leaders identified external networks as key. A team leader suggested:

> *Certainly those people who have received ALTC grants or have had … a citation or an award, are all networked into their colleagues at other institutions. [42-DH-A-2]*

External networks weren't just those related to teaching and learning *per se.* As a project team member explained:

> *What I think has changed probably in the last year … and accelerated considerably since the demise of ALTC, has been this idea of discipline networks, that the disciplines are now standing up and taking much more ownership … last year … was when the disciplines … started to realise that they had quite a significant role to play in this and that they … [had] a legitimate role to play. [42-DH-A-2]*

The importance of networking for finding potential partners outside one's own institution to submit a successful grant application was noted by a team leader:

> *… the criteria have been set so that individuals within a discipline who want to apply for a grant, know they're going to have to talk to their contemporaries at another university. [20-RC-B-1]*

One team project leader noted the potential of the external networks:

> *Those networks have really strengthened the capacity to work together across institutional boundaries, and I think it's been a wonderful thing. [07-GS-B-1]*

6. A distributed teaching and learning support structure exists within the institution and is coordinated from the centre

The findings of this project show clearly that, notwithstanding the challenges of collaborating and communicating across large, complex universities, a distributed institutional support structure for teaching and learning enhancement, coordinated from the centre, was perceived to be the most effective structure.

Most commonly this involved cooperation between a central teaching and learning centre and one or more of: teaching and learning committees; the ADTLs or equivalent; educational development and other staff located in the faculties; and a critical mass of people with a commitment to teaching and learning improvement and enhancement who have the capacity to lead. In this distributed context, mentoring support for nominees was also frequently mentioned.

From the partner survey, it was clear that centralised teaching and learning leadership arrangements were the most frequently reported for activities and efforts to enhance teaching and learning. Arrangements that were collaborative or distributed were less common but were clearly evident. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7: Leadership arrangements within institutions

Factor	Institution 1 (N=24)	Institution 2 (N=23)	Institution 3 (N=34)	Institution 4 (N=7)	Overall (N=88)
Centralised leadership or support	47.4	31.8	51.5	28.6	43.2
Collaborative model	21.1	27.3	30.3	0.0	24.7
Distributed leadership	26.3	9.1	18.2	42.9	19.8

NB: Per cent of responses for each institution and factor are shown. Respondents could provide more than one response to this question.

Leadership focused in the centre

Interviews with various levels of leaders indicated the value of leadership of teaching and learning enhancement focused in the centre.

PEI project team members interviewed commented as follows on centralised leadership:

> *It's absolutely increased staff engagement with the ALTC. [39-GS-A-1]*
>
> *I think it's been very enabling, because having [it] associated with my office meant that in bureaucratic terms, it was very lean, and so we could make decisions very quickly. [20-MB-A-1]*

Project leaders held similar views about centralised leadership:

> *Brilliant it's been absolutely fantastic, it really allowed us to have a very careful think about what we were trying to do in the space, and how we were trying to get staff to engage in this. [03-DH-B-2]*
>
> *… we are a standalone office with our own budget and our own lines of reporting. And I think that has been absolutely significant. [20-RC-B-1]*

Senior leaders also commented favourably on a centralised leadership arrangement:

> *So I think that, because we stand alone, that helps people see us as independent probably which is a positive. [20-RC-C-1]*

There were comments from leaders at all three levels on the 'downside' of being centrally located structurally. For example, a project team member interviewed commented:

> *I would say the downside, if such it be, is that with any central organisational unit, however, small, however lean, however directly connected, there is always going to be a challenge of communicating out, into a diverse university. We have nine faculties, so doing the work of just information, communication, quite apart from involvement and engagement, is always going to be a big task. [20-MB-A-1]*

A project leader commented:

> *It's … not ideal in terms of being able to have a unit on a single campus site, but given the complexity of a multi-campus university that has four academic divisions that work quite autonomously, but aren't even matched on the campuses, so that's another dilemma that we have, I think it's the best we can do, given the way the university organises itself. [04-DH-B-1]*

Finally, a project team member said:

> *… on the negative I think it took us longer to establish a presence in our own right and that was fairly challenging to start with because people didn't know who we were and what we did, so we had to do more communication and more marketing at the beginning to just let people know that we were here and what our role was. [20-RC-C-1]*

Often, references to distributed leadership were made as some of the ways in which the 'downsides' might be addressed.

Distributed involvement through faculty structures

The examination of final and evaluation reports found that the PEI worked most effectively within an institution when there was distributed involvement that incorporated the centre and faculty structures. Two-thirds of the final reports and almost half of the evaluation reports examined referred to the importance of ensuring faculty, department and school involvement in efforts to enhance teaching and learning. Such involvement included work by the ADTL or equivalent and the work of teaching and learning committee members to assist in aligning institutional and faculty processes, disseminating information, assisting award and grant applicants and encouraging innovation and improved practice. Such distribution was reported to have also been helpful at other levels, including policy and governance levels, as indicated below in some of the quotes from interviews with senior leaders.

Interviews with very senior leaders indicated a view that the involvement of both the centre and faculties was enabling. As one said:

> *I think it's actually been quite helpful. I mean the things that I think worked really well is … obviously having a dedicated person [in the centre], whose role is to work with the educational developers in the colleges and work with the individuals in the colleges who are going to apply for the awards and grants. [42-DH-A-2]*

Project leaders held similar views:

> *I think structurally it's a good model because you have the people within the colleges who have that contact with the staff within their college and that local knowledge that was then fed into the work of the university-wide coordinator. So I think structurally when those positions are filled, the model really works. [42-DH-B-1]*

> *So it's really a four-part partnership, so the partnership with the academic development unit, the secretariat, the educational excellence committee and the chair of that, and then obviously, through those three mechanisms, the strong engagement with the academic faculties. So from the start, we've promoted the PEI initiatives, all the things that came under that umbrella, as forging closer partnerships among elements of the institution, and that's been successful. [07-GS-B-1]*

> *It's been a fabulous enabler, in many ways, as I said, so there's been an enabler at the systems level, it's been an enabler from a policy perspective, and from a governance perspective, so the committee that manages the encouragement of educational excellence, and recruiting of, or encouraging people to apply for awards across the institution. [07-GS-B-1].*

Some of the PEI project team members interviewed also believed that a distributed structure was enabling:

> *... so I think that system … worked very well because the associate deans of learning and teaching were able to come into the faculties and at their faculty learning and teaching committee(s) talk to people - representatives from departments - to get some input into the policy development. [15-AL-C-1]*

As Table 8 shows, when survey respondents were asked*, 'What support structures/strategies were available to enable staff to engage with ALTC Programs?',* over a third indicated that support at faculty level featured.

Table 8: Support structure/strategies to engage staff

Factor	Institution 1 (N=24)	Institution 2 (N=23)	Institution 3 (N=34)	Institution 4 (N=7)	Overall (N=88)
Support at faculty level	20.8	13.0	52.9	57.1	34.1

NB: Per cent of responses for each institution and factor are shown

However, some leaders interviewed also believed the distributed arrangements didn't always work as hoped or intended. As project leaders commented:

> *There is one faculty within the university that is very large and very powerful and they have failed to engage … for much of the time and that's even when we had the support of the Provost and [the] centre … [for] learning and teaching committee to set up the original working party to develop … official university policies and procedures. [15-AL-B-2b]*

> *... but doing the work across the university also has limitations as well, because then when you have a university wide process there has to be some more processes that are embedded within the faculties and with us some faculties had that well embedded and some faculties were just starting with the PEI project. So there wasn't a uniform system as such. [08-AL-B-1]*

The point that distributed arrangements may or may not have helped or hindered the success of the initiative within an institution was made:

> *I think it was successful in that I think more people did become engaged, but I think it could have, that could have happened in another structure as well and may have happened irrespective of that. I'm not sure ... [29-MB-B-2]*

When asked about the impacts of the PEI, eleven of the fourteen project leaders interviewed mentioned the development of institutional structures to support teaching and learning:

> *So that's not just the recognition through awards or support through grants but just the increased awareness of the importance of learning and teaching and the structures there to help people succeed in that area ... so, for example … we have our own foundations in learning and teaching program now for all new staff and all new staff have to attend that. [15AL-B-2b]*

Mentoring

Mentoring was related to the provision of high-quality support for ALTC applicants and nominees. Mentors were able to nurture applicants' skills and professional development. Ten PEI final reports (56 per cent) and five evaluation reports (38 per cent) discussed the development of mentoring relationships or an ongoing mentoring program as part of implementing their PEIs.

Mentoring was offered in a range of ways and from a range of sources, including the centre and faculties. Eight final reports (44 per cent) and seven evaluation reports (54 per cent) referred to collegial activities where past ALTC award and grant winners assisted current applicants to mentor and share knowledge of the evidential requirements for successful submissions (Nagy *et al*. 2011).

One project leader noted the benefit for sustainability of mentoring:

> *… rather than just having the one person here in the learning and teaching unit with that responsibility, to then be able to use the more distributed version of that kind of leadership and to work with leaders within our academic divisions and to build up a mentoring scheme. So that what we put our PEI funding towards, rather than funding the position, which I think in many universities, they funded that kind of position because they didn't have that. So I think we were sort of a step ahead, because we had the capacity to be able to do that right at the beginning. [04-DH-B-1]*

7. Mechanisms to recognise excellence in teaching and learning and to enable teaching and learning career pathways are in place

Professional development for academic staff in teaching and recognition and reward mechanisms for excellence in teaching are widely understood to be important. Often less well understood is the need to ensure career pathways for those committed to teaching and learning. This project found that both are an important component of a successful leadership of teaching and learning enhancement.

All three major data sources for this project indicated the centrality of linking efforts to enhance teaching and learning with promotion opportunities. First, the final and evaluation reports indicated that there was often integration of ALTC awards or grants into university promotion criteria. Second, when staff in the four project partner universities were asked in what ways staff who received ALTC awards, grants or fellowships were recognised for their achievements, around one-third of the 88 survey respondents indicated that this recognition occurred through promotion. Third, through the interviews, one of the key points identified by senior leaders as central to sustainability of enhancement was the presence of links to promotions rounds. Project leader interviewees believed a promotion, reward and recognition scheme to be central to the embedding of teaching and learning enhancement initiatives.

There was evidence in interviews across the leadership levels of the value of the recognition of excellence in teaching and learning, including through promotion. The importance of such recognition for both the sustainability of efforts to enhance teaching and learning and for embedding such efforts were also recognised at the three levels of leadership. One project leader interviewed said:

> *We have embedded that idea … that excellence in teaching and learning is important and is valued and that we can recognise that within our institution. [39-GS-B-1a]*

Recognition mechanisms often served multiple purposes. One central purpose was acknowledging and celebrating the excellent work of recipients, and in some cases, also of the nominees who had not been successful. Another was contributing to the dissemination of good practice. A third was the provision of networking opportunities. A fourth was raising awareness of the opportunities available to those who excelled in teaching and/or were interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning. There were also development benefits for award and grant recipients. Twenty-one per cent of survey respondents identified that key benefits of ALTC opportunities included career and professional development.

The integration of ALTC awards or grants into university promotion criteria was also evident in final and evaluation reports. As the summary paper notes, acknowledging and celebrating the excellent work of recipients was undertaken through a range of other means as well. These included: celebratory events; communication about the successes of individuals and teams; and invitations for winners to join relevant committees, subcommittees and/or panels to become institutional teaching fellows and/or to contribute to various fora. Staff who had received awards and/or grants were often invited to contribute to dissemination through activities such as: presentations at conferences or other events; developing recordings about their work such as videos or podcasts; funded visits to other institutions to share their work; grant-writing workshops for future applicants; the provision of case studies or exemplars for the professional development of others; peer support or mentoring; and/or publishing about their work.

When survey respondents were asked, '*In what ways were staff who received ALTC awards, grants or fellowships recognised for their achievements?*' the most frequently reported strategy overall was holding an award ceremony with almost half of the sample indicating such an event in their responses, as indicated in Table 9. There was a wide range of other ways in which recognition took place. Respondents from institution 3 reported having a special institutional celebration and/or the opportunity to showcase a grant project. Participants from institution 4 reported receiving an invitation to join a committee related to teaching and learning and/or to become a reviewer of ALTC applications. Respondents from both institutions 1 and 3 indicated recognition through invitations to present ALTC-related professional development sessions and respondents from institutions 2 and 4 indicated invitations to mentor future applicants or nominees.

Table 9: Mechanisms through which teaching excellence was recognised

	Institution 1 (N=24)	Institution 2 (N=23)	Institution 3 (N=34)	Institution 4 (N=7)	Overall (N=88)
Award ceremony	47.8	52.2	42.4	71.4	48.8
Invitation to present PD	47.8	17.4	48.5	42.9	41.9
Showcase of grant project	39.1	17.4	66.7	14.3	41.9
Special celebration	39.1	17.4	54.5	0.0	36.0
Invitation to review*	39.1	21.7	33.3	57.1	33.7
Promotion	34.8	26.1	36.4	28.6	33.7
Invitation to mentor**	30.4	52.2	30.3	57.1	29.1
Invitation to join committee	21.7	8.7	21.2	42.9	19.8

NB: Per cent of responses for each institution and factor are shown
* ALTC applications internally
** Future nominees/applicants

Survey respondents were asked what factors have enabled engagement strategies at their institution. The one factor cited was that long-term planning and the provision of a comprehensive calendar of events was helpful. The most common arrangement across the institutions examined as part of this project was an annual cycle of activities and decisions related to teaching and learning that incorporated some or all of the multiple formats and purposes outlined above.

Conclusion

Focusing on the teaching and learning leadership lessons that have been learnt from a nation-wide initiative funded by the ALTC, this project has uncovered seven evidence-based insights into successfully leading the enhancement of teaching and learning in Australian higher education institutions.

As outlined in detail in this report, these insights relate to: institutional strategic alignment; symbolic and fiscal support; workload management; the reduction of tensions between research and teaching; research and scholarship; coordinated support structures; and mechanisms to recognise and reward excellence.

Drawing on the reflections, experience, knowledge and learning of leaders and staff in 22 Australian universities, on previous leadership and other projects and on relevant literature, the project is fundamentally focused on learning – learning from others and from 'what works'.

As the external evaluator commented, the project was ambitious and made assumptions about both how interviewees would articulate the links between leadership, strategy and success and the ease with which a project of this design might uncover evidence of links between strategy, practice and enhancement in learning and teaching. There would be value in further investigation of the views of very senior leaders in universities, who are likely to be better able to articulate these links and provide additional useful insights for the sector on quality assurance and quality enhancement.

The external evaluator also noted that greater depth of investigation might have been possible if the project had been allowed greater time. This would have given the potential to build on insights from one part of the project to the next, particularly in designing questions for subsequent stages and ensuring the requisite time for ethics approval. Future research should allow sufficient time to facilitate the depth of investigation necessary to uncover the links articulated above so that these may be shared to the benefit of the sector.

There is also strong merit in future research on the potential of mentoring for leadership capacity development. Mentoring emerged as a very strong theme in the project in relation to sustainability, which is a critical aspect of effective university leadership. The sector would benefit from an investigation of peer and other mentoring as one potential, cost-effective mechanism for achieving the successful development of the next generations of leaders.

All of that said, it is hoped that the leadership lessons learned by the sector and gathered and synthesised during this project will provide useful guidance to the sector in their efforts to continually enhance teaching and learning. This would ensure that the significant investment made through the PEI by the ALTC could be leveraged for maximum benefit within and across institutions.

It is critical to understand and learn from 'what works' in the leadership of teaching and learning in a context of shrinking resources and one that incorporates a 'growing list of change forces in the environment that are challenging universities with ferocious intensity' (Fullan and Scott, 2009, p.1).

As these change forces continue to intensify, further research will be necessary to ensure that leadership of university teaching and learning evolves and develops to accommodate the external and internal contexts in which it takes place. So too, investigation into leadership capacity development in such changing contexts will be necessary as universities draw on past lessons while looking to continually enhance their quality in an uncertain future.

Dissemination

The dissemination strategy adopted for this project was continuous throughout the project. It included a range of approaches as outlined below, to raise awareness of the project as it progressed and to solicit feedback on early key findings from key stakeholder groups including Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) and the Promoting Excellence networks. Survey data collection at four universities and interviews at 10 institutions across the sector provided opportunities to raise awareness about the project as well as to involve multiple institutions and colleagues in the project. Active dissemination to solicit feedback on work in progress was afforded through presenting at the 2011 Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) conference and presenting and workshopping at Promoting Excellence network events in 2010 and 2011. Informal opportunities for dissemination were also leveraged through team members' institutional and national networks.

The dissemination of the booklet *Seven insights for leading sustainable change in teaching and learning in Australian universities* across Australia to senior and other leaders in both the centre of the university and in faculties will ensure leaders in teaching and learning across the sector have access to the project findings in a succinct and useable resource.

The following specific dissemination activities for the project took place.

1. ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI) Seminar, Brisbane, September 2010

The ALTC hosted this event, which covered a variety of topics including:

- Innovation and Development grants;
- Leadership for Excellence in Teaching and Learning grants;
- Factors that enhance the strength of the proposal and grant success;
- Changes to grant assessment procedures;
- Dissemination enhancement.

The event presented an early opportunity to launch the newly endorsed project to the audience of representatives from Australian universities. The objectives of the project were outlined along with the methodology and intended outcomes.

2. National PEI Forum, Adelaide, June 2011

The project team was invited by the ALTC to address the National PEI Forum to share the project findings to date, via interactive workshop discussions. There are more details about this aspect of the dissemination in the Method section of the Appendices of this report.

3. A presentation at the 2011 Higher Education Research Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Conference, Gold Coast, July

The Conference was a collaboration between Queensland universities with representation from across Australia and internationally. Consistent with the theme, *Higher Education on the Edge*, two project team members gave a presentation to outline the project objectives and present a discussion of the preliminary outcomes.

The paper was titled*: Lessons from the ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative: The influence of context*.

The authors were Miriam Brooker and Rick Cummings (Murdoch University).

4. Distribution of the summary paper to the Leadership Program Standing Committee, the ALTC Board and Australian universities, August 2011

The summary paper produced by the team was distributed to: the ALTC Leadership Program Standing Committee; the ALTC Board; and 42 higher education institutions across Australia via institutional leaders such as Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic), Pro Vice-Chancellors (Teaching and Learning), and Directors/Executive Directors of Academic Development Units or Teaching and Learning Centres.

5. Distribution of the summary paper to delegates of the 2011 ERGA Conference, Adelaide, September

One of the current project team leaders, Professor Marcia Devlin, was invited to speak on an expert panel at the Education Research Group of Adelaide (ERGA) 2011 Conference. This provided a forum to disseminate the summary paper to attendees.

6. An update to the Queensland Promoting Excellence Network Forum, Griffith University College of Art, Brisbane, October 2011

Queensland University of Technology hosted this event, which was attended by 28 staff from eight Queensland institutions, Southern Cross University and the DEEWR Office for Learning and Teaching. The program included:

- DEEWR/OLT update;
- Panel session of Discipline Network Leaders and Fellows;
- QPEN update from institutions and planning next steps; and
- An update on the current project, *Leading sustainable improvement in university teaching and learning: Lessons from the sector*.

7. Distribution of the 'Seven insights' document to a Victorian-Tasmanian State based Promoting Excellence Network Workshop, Monash University, City campus, February, 2012

Monash University hosted this event, which was attended by about 30 staff from across Victoria and Tasmania. The program included:

- Suzi Hewlett, Branch Manager, Office for Learning & Teaching, Higher Education Division, Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education plus Q&A;
- A get-to-know-you session;
- Deakin University – *Project Presentation 'Teaching Students from Low SES Backgrounds';*
- Monash University – *'Making Learning and Teaching Research Count';*
- La Trobe University – *'La Trobe's approach to curriculum renewal and flexible learning development: assessing & reporting graduate capabilities';* and
- University of Tasmania – '*Peer Professional Learning Program for Awards: a model for building excellence'.*

Ms Hewlett was given several copies of the 'Seven Insights' document and copies were made available for attendees at the workshop.

8. Distribution of the 'Seven insights' document to the Higher Education Evaluation Roundtable, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta campus, February, 2012

This event was hosted by the University of Western Sydney and attended by around 70 staff from across the sector, as well as representatives from DIISRTE. The program included:

- Keynote Presentation – Professor Ian O'Connor, Vice Chancellor and President, Griffith University and Chair, Advancing Quality in Higher Education (AQHE) Reference Group;
- Roundtable Discussion and Feedback on DEEWR Discussion Papers (Phil Aungles and DEEWR representatives were involved in this discussion);
- Panel Discussion – *Engaging with the Advancing Quality Agenda: Challenges and Opportunities* (in which project leader Professor Marcia Devlin was asked to participate);
- Responding to the Quality Agenda in your University: Institutional case studies.

Copies of the 'Seven Insights' document were made available for attendees at the event.

9. Distribution of the 'Seven insights' document to the CReaTe Summit, Deakin Management Centre, Deakin University, February, 2012

This event was hosted by Deakin University and attended by around 50 staff from Deakin. The program included presentations by members of senior executive and the Curriculum Reform and Transformation Initiative (CReaTe) workstream leaders. A small number of copies of the 'Seven Insights' document were made available at the event.

10. Distribution of the e-copy of the 'Seven insights' document to a teaching and learning group at The University of Adelaide, February, 2012

Having collected a hard copy of the 'Seven insights' document from the UWS forum, the Director of Academic Quality Assurance, Quality & Reviews at The University of Adelaide, Kim Davidson, requested an e-version to circulate to colleagues undertaking an online teaching and learning related institutional project at The University of Adelaide.

11. Submission of a paper of the major findings of the project to the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*

A paper provisionally titled, '*What works in teaching and learning leadership: Lessons from the Australian higher education sector'*, prepared by the project leader, Professor Marcia Devlin, on behalf of the team was submitted to the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* and is under review at the time of writing this final report.

Project evaluation

The team was extremely fortunate that the external evaluator for the project, Dr Elizabeth McDonald, was the designer of the ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative. In addition, project team member, Professor Rick Cummings, has specialist expertise in the field of program evaluation. Both were able to provide extensive formative feedback continuously throughout the project.

Formative evaluation

The evaluation strategy drew from a range of sources to inform the review of progress against project milestones and to refocus project directions as this became necessary. Some of the critical points for reflection and review are outlined in the Dissemination section. Of particular note were the opportunities for feedback on early findings through presentations and the project workshop at the National 2011 Promoting Excellence Initiative Forum.

The project reference group was invited to provide feedback at a number of project milestones, for example, when the team was finalising the survey instrument and interview schedule; in relation to the proposed project refocus in light of changes in the higher education sector; and on the draft final report. Internal reports on the survey results and interview data provided critical points for reflection by the team and evaluator on emergent project findings. This strategy was beneficial in monitoring both the relevance of findings and the broader project relevance in the shifting higher education learning and teaching context. Monitoring of project relevance and progress were key foci of the four full day and numerous teleconference project team meetings held over the course of the project.

Of particular note was the role played by the external evaluator. It was agreed that the evaluator take an active role in the formative evaluation of the project and the evaluator attended many of project team meetings, as well as liaising frequently with the project co-leader in the lead institution. The evaluator prepared a brief Evaluation Framework paper that posited a number of questions for consideration by the team. The questions were framed in light of the structural changes in the environment of university learning and teaching, namely the closure of the ALTC. The team's response to these questions was instrumental in ensuring alignment between the project focus and the changed higher education context as outlined in the section About this project.

Summative evaluation

The external summative evaluation report prepared by Dr Elizabeth McDonald is provided in Appendix 5.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Project methodology

Data was collected in four main activities for this project:

1. A thematic analysis of final and evaluation reports on the PEI from a sample of 18 institutions;
2. A survey of teaching and learning practitioners and leaders at the four partner universities;
3. A program of interviews with 24 key leaders at 10 universities; and also
4. A workshop activity at a national forum of PEI stakeholders where early findings were tested and validated.

The individual and collective expertise of the current project team members was also used to inform data gathering and to interpret the findings.

Each of these activities is described in detail below. The methodology received ethics approval from the Deakin University Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG [AE] 11-28) and subsequently from the other universities.

Analysis of PEI final and evaluation reports

The project commenced with a thematic analysis of the project and evaluation reports from a sample of PEI projects to identify the benefits and challenges that were commonly experienced within the university-based projects. Eighteen of the 34 available final PEI reports (53 per cent) as well as 13 (38 per cent) corresponding PEI evaluation reports were analysed, resulting in a database of 31 reports in total. Evaluators are generally external to the institution, and thus may have provided different perspectives from those reported by institutions in the final reports. The reason for the different numbers of reports is that some evaluations were reported as part of the final project report.

The sample included a selection of different types of universities with an emphasis on ensuring geographical representation where possible. In the end, the sample included institutions from each State and Territory and included five from the Group of Eight, four from the Innovative Research Universities, two from the Australian Technology Network, and seven unaligned institutions, including three in rural or regional locations.

A thematic analysis of the sample of reports was undertaken.Content of the reports was coded and analysed using NVivo9 software. The coding was based on the Conceptual Framework for Analysis of PEI documents (Figure 2) developed by the project team and revised after a preliminary analysis of reports from three institutions. The coding themes developed within the Conceptual Framework categories were as follows:

- Institutional Readiness (19)
- Leadership (43)
- Resources (34)
- Structure (43)
- Policy/Plans (37)
- Outcomes/Impact (171)

- Lessons Learned (27);
- Critical Success Factors (35); and
- Challenges/Hindrances (58).

The total of 467 coding themes was considered too unwieldy for analysis purposes. Therefore, during this data reduction process, main themes were distilled and related subcategories from the initial analysis subsumed into those themes.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for analysis of PEI reports

1 INSTITUTIONAL READINESS a) Institutional priorities **2 LEADERSHIP** a) Person/their qualities b) Positional power c) Leadership development d) Leadership models **3 RESOURCES** a) Staffing b) Budget **4 STRUCTURE** a) Processes b) Governance **5 POLICY/PLANS**	**6 OUTCOMES/IMPACT** a) Sustainability b) Sharing/networking/collegiality c) Dissemination d) Individuals or academic's leadership development e) More grants or awards or under development f) New ideas or activities g) Transferable outcomes **7 LESSONS LEARNT** a) Possible linkage to main themes **8 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS** **9 CHALLENGES/HINDERANCE**

The findings from this activity were published in a report to the ALTC entitled *ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative: major themes identified in completed institutional project reports ('The summary paper').* This paper was the Leadership Program Standing Committee of the ALTC: the ALTC Board; to senior leaders in all universities; and at the 2011 HERDSA international conference.

Survey of staff in partner institutions

An online survey of a selected sample of staff who would have knowledge of activities and efforts designed to enhance teaching and learning was conducted in the four partner institutions. The sample for each institution was generated by the project team member representing that institution and contact lists including email addresses were developed of those that were assumed to have assumed to have either interacted with the PEI in their institution and/or had knowledge of activities and efforts designed to enhance teaching and learning. Those surveyed held the following sorts of positions or roles:

- Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) or their equivalent;
- Faculty/school teaching and learning committee members;
- Central teaching and learning committee members;
- Leaders in the university related to the PEI;

- Those involved with the ALTC;
- Those who had been recognised for outstanding teaching;
- Those who worked in educational and academic development roles;
- Leaders in teaching and learning; and
- Members of selection and review committees for ALTC grants, awards or fellowships.

The participant lists developed within each partner institution varied in both size and composition. The number of participants nominated within each institution ranged from 27 to 172 and the composition of the cohorts varied according to their particular institutional structures.

Survey invitees received a personal email from a project team leader within their institution, as well as an institution-specific email from the survey administrator (including a link to the survey consent form and the survey). Participants were able to complete the survey anonymously, and were only identified as belonging to one of the four partner institutions. The survey was designed to be completed within 20 minutes.

The survey was administered online within the four partner institutions connected with this project (Deakin University, Queensland University of Technology, Murdoch University, and Swinburne University of Technology) during June 2011. The survey consisted of 29 questions about the characteristics and strategies employed within their institution's PEI projects, and perceived leadership impacts, benefits, challenges and outcomes. A copy of the survey instrument is in Appendix 2.

The survey was administered over a three-week period using the Murdoch Online Survey System (MOSS). In total, 88 responses were received from a potential 421 respondents giving an overall response rate of 21per cent. Individual response rates for the universities involved in the survey are displayed in Table 10, which also shows the proportion of the total responses contributed by each institution. As the last column shows, responses from Institution 3 made up 2 out of every 5, and Institution 4 fewer than 1 out of 10.

Table 10: Response rates for the participating institutions

Institution	Responses	Response Rate	Percentage of Sample
Institution 3	34	20	38.6
Institution 1	24	16	27.3
Institution 2	23	31	26.1
Institution 4	7	26	8.0
Total:	**88**	**21**	**100.0**

Interviews of selected staff in partner institutions

Interviews were conducted with a selected sample of 24 leaders in teaching and learning in 10 Australian institutions. The university sample selection was purposeful to ensure a representative sample of university types, as well as regional and city universities.

Invitations to participate in the research were sent to the Provost, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at 10 Australian Universities. The senior leaders approached were asked to nominate two to three staff connected with the PEI at different seniority levels (project sponsors, project leaders and a member of the project team) to be interviewed. Nominated staff were then invited to be interviewed and informed consent sought.

Interviews were conducted in July and August 2011. Of the total of 24 interviews, four were at sponsor level, 14 at PEI project leader level and 6 at PEI team member level.

The interviewee was given an outline of the project as well as of the themes to which the questions related. A copy of the interview schedule is in Appendix 3.

Audio files of interviews were transcribed and the data analysed using procedures common in interpretive analysis (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Transcripts were read and codes were developed based on a mixture of questions in the interviews and emergent concepts (Tesch, 1990) as well as the collective understanding of the project team of relevant issues. The analysis employed a constant comparative approach (Thorn, 2000), an iterative process that grouped similar ideas, and looked for similarities as well as major differences.

Roundtable discussions at ALTC national forum

The summary paper was discussed at a national PEI network workshop held by the ALTC June 78, 2011, in Adelaide. Following a brief presentation of the report, the audience of 50 was broken into six groups of between 7 and 10 participants for roundtable discussions on the findings in the summary paper, each facilitated by members of the project team or an ALTC staff member. Each group addressed a set of six questions (see Appendix 4) designed to validate the findings and identify any gaps.

Data synthesis

The data from the summary paper, the survey and the interviews were combined, synthesised and examined for unifying themes. These themes were considered in light of the team's collective experience in, and knowledge of, teaching and learning leadership. A schema that best represented the findings of the study was designed and refined by the team.

Appendix 2: Online survey questionnaire

The survey contained questions related to four major aspects of leadership of the Promoting Excellence Initiative:

1. **Awareness of the Promoting Excellence Initiative**
2. **Engagement with the Promoting Excellence Initiative**
3. **Promoting Excellence Initiative Leadership**
4. **Promoting Excellence Initiative Outcomes**

The questions appeared in numerical order from 1 to 29 on the survey. They are displayed below in their groupings.

1. Awareness of the Promoting Excellence Initiative

Q1. What have been the primary vehicles in your institution for disseminating information to staff about ALTC opportunities i.e. Awards, Grants, Fellowships and Discipline Scholars?

Q2. How effective do you believe these strategies were overall in raising staff awareness of the opportunities offered? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q3. In your view, what factors influenced the effectiveness of these strategies?

Q6. What strategies have been used to disseminate reports/outcomes from ALTC Grant projects?

Q7. How effectively have the reports/outcomes from ALTC Grant projects been disseminated within your institution? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q8. What factors do you believe have inhibited the dissemination of reports/outcomes from ALTC Grant projects?

Q9. To what extent do you believe this dissemination has benefited staff? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q10. In what ways were staff who received ALTC Awards, Grants or Fellowships recognised for their achievements?

Q11. To what extent do you think staff awareness, including yourself, of the ALTC and its initiatives has been increased over the life of the PEI project (2008–2010)? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q12. Why? Please explain your answer to Q11.

2. Engagement with the Promoting Excellence Initiative

Q4. What support structures/strategies were available to enable staff to engage with ALTC programs?

Q5. What factors do you believe have inhibited staff in your institution from engagement with ALTC programs?

Q13. In what ways have staff been engaged in learning and teaching development over the life of the PEI project?

Q14. In your view, how well were these learning and teaching engagement strategies embedded? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q15. How much has the level of staff (including your own) engagement in learning and teaching increased over the life of the PEI project? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q16. What factors do you believe have inhibited or enabled engagement strategies at your institution?

3. Promoting Excellence Initiative Leadership

Q17. To what extent have engagement strategies in your institution increased staff (your) leadership capacity in learning and teaching over the life of the PEI project? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q18. To what extent have the leadership responsibilities for implementing ALTC engagement been shared between central areas and faculties? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q19. Which of the following leadership models best characterise your institution's approach for engaging staff in ALTC-related activity? *(Options were as many as applied from: Centralised leadership or support; Communities of practice; Collaborative model; Distributive leadership; Service model; Action learning; Consultative model; Other, please specify; Don't know).*

Q20. To your knowledge, how effective has the model(s) been in securing staff engagement with ALTC opportunities? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

4. Promoting Excellence Initiatives Outcomes

Q21. Please identify any key learning and teaching priorities that you are aware have been advanced in your institution as a consequence of supporting staff engagement with ALTC programs?

Q22. To what extent do you believe staff may have benefited, directly or indirectly, from the PEI project? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q23. While it is difficult to establish clear links between PEI and student learning, to what extent do you believe students may have benefited, directly or indirectly, from the PEI? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q24. Are you able to provide comment or evidence of improved student learning outcomes as a consequence of staff engagement with the PEI?

Q25. Please provide your comment(s) and/or evidence below.

Q26. Please list up to three challenges that have been experienced within your institution or by you personally with regard to ALTC opportunities.

Q27. Please list up to three benefits that have been experienced within your institution or by you personally with regard to ALTC opportunities.

Q28. Now that ALTC funding for the PEI in your university has been completed, to what extent do you believe your institution will continue with engagement strategies for learning and teaching that were established during the PEI? *(Options: Extremely; Considerably; Moderately; A little; Not at all; Don't know)*

Q29. Do you have any other comments about the PEI or ALTC projects?

Appendix 3: Interview schedule

Interviewer guidelines
Section A: introductory explanation

Interviewer reads: This project seeks to collect data about leadership models and challenges faced by those charged within institutions with implementing ALTC funded PEI initiatives. We seek your input to identify what lessons have been learnt from the implementation of the particular objectives of your institution's PEI project. In particular, we are interested in whether the specific location in which your institution's PEI project was placed within your institution's organisational structure may have contributed to the level of success or otherwise. When answering the following questions, please think about the structural positioning and consequent leadership challenges in your responses.

I'll just start by telling you a little about the PEI.

In 2008 the Australian Learning and Teaching Council's (ALTC) Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI) provided one-off funding to universities to undertake projects to build and/or consolidate their capacity to engage constructively with ALTC programs. PEI projects across the sector have deployed a wide range of strategies to support staff and institutional engagement with ALTC programs to enhance learning and teaching.

NB: The interview schedule for participants also provides some background information to the ALTC – Section A.

Demographics
Information regarding the participants' name, position, institution, the date of interview and whether a consent form has been completed will be collected on the interview schedule (interviewer form) prior to the beginning of the interview.

Please thank the participants for their time and input at the end of the interview.

Interview questions

1. How would you describe your institution's level of readiness to engage with ALTC's objectives and its programs at the time the PEI was launched in 2008?
2. Did your institution's PEI Project feed into or support work already being undertaken or planned at your institution?

Y N

2a. If yes, how?	**If no,** what problems did this create?

3. Please describe the structural positioning of your institution's PEI Project within your institution, that is, tell me where it was located and how it was led and implemented.
4. In your view, to what extent has this structure been enabling or limiting in terms the institution's and staff engagement with ALTC?

4a. If enabling, how?	**If limiting,** how?

5. Do you believe that your institution's PEI Project and engagement with the ALTC in general had broad support from the university executive?

Y N

5a. If yes, how?	**If no,** why not?

6. Have there been any major leadership challenges / issues associated with implementation of your institution's PEI Project and improving engagement with the ALTC in general?

Y N

6a. If no, *please ensure that this is clearly stated on the tape before moving onto the next question.*

If yes – Could you describe these challenges/issues and how they have been addressed or overcome?

Section B:

Interviewer reads: *When thinking about your responses to the following questions, we would like you to consider what challenges you may have experienced in trying to implement the PEI initiatives. These challenges are likely to have impacted on the level of success that institutions have had in embedding initiatives, with consequences for long-term sustainability.*

7. Do you think your institution was successful in embedding the initiatives proposed within your institution's PEI across the university?

Y N

7a. If yes, how?	**If no,** why not?

7b. How well do you think the PEI initiatives at your institution were embedded across the university?
❏ Not at all ❏ Somewhat ❏ Moderately ❏ Considerably ❏ Extremely ❏ Don't know

(NB: Respondents have these options on their participant's sheet.) ***Please ensure that the respondent's answer is stated on the tape.***

8. Considering the level of embedding you have indicated, what has been done to enhance the sustainability of these initiatives?

9. In what ways, if any, has the implementation of your institution's PEI Project facilitated scholarly networks internally?

10. In what ways, if any, has it facilitated scholarly networks externally?

11. In summary:

a) What have been the three most significant areas of impact of the implementation of your institution's PEI Project?
b) What have been the three biggest challenges associated with the implementation of your institution's PEI Project?

Appendix 4: Questions used at PEI Forum

GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT REPRESENTATIVES

The team will hold a round table discussion to:

- Obtain feedback on summary paper including identification of any gaps;
- Ascertain views of impact of PEI on leadership approaches/models and the sustainability of these; and
- Ascertain views on sustainability of leadership and PEI strategies.

The summary paper
Overall, the PEIs were effective in raising awareness about ALTC programs and in furthering the values and aims of the ALTC within universities around Australia. Specific experiences and impacts varied depending on the institutional context as well as on the ways in which the PEI was designed and implemented within an institution.

The examination of final and evaluation reports found that the PEI worked most effectively within an institution when:

- alignment with the strategic directions of the university occurred;
- high level leadership was evident;
- there was distributed involvement through faculty structures;
- challenges inherent in the culture of an institution were well managed;
- there was additional institutional investment to the initiative; and
- a range of enhancement and implementation approaches were employed.

The points are not hierarchical or listed in any particular order of importance.

While the Stage One outcomes have focused on what has been reported in final and evaluation reports, we are interested in how the leadership was enacted/empowered within institutions to further the PEI cause. We believe the effectiveness of PEI was impacted on by the structural position of the initiative within an institution. The following questions seek your feedback about what we have presented in the summary document and your perceptions about the PEI more generally.

Themes and questions

Validation

1. Do the outcomes reflect your experience? *(These are the outcomes from the summary paper, we are looking for validation of the common themes that we have identified).*
2. What key issues, if any, do you believe have not been identified in the outcomes presented? *(We are looking for gaps and any additional information that may have missed in the PEI final and evaluation reports).*

Structure and leadership

3. To what extent did the structural positioning of the PEI impact the effectiveness of teaching and learning programs that were introduced in your institution? *(We want to know whether it was centrally located or at the faculty level within the university hierarchy).*
4. What positive influences did the PEI have on teaching and learning leadership within your institutions? *(We want to know whether the PEI contributed to enabling teaching and learning, leadership, enhancement and development in any way? If so, how?)*

Sustainability

5. What challenges do you see lies ahead for sustainability of PEI programs? (*Rather than focusing on changes and implications for the ATLC, this relates to initiatives that were implemented as part of PEI within institutions).*
6. Please describe two key PEI strategies that your institution has implemented that will be continued into the foreseeable future.

Questions for discussion on summary paper presented to each table
Overall, the PEIs were effective in raising awareness about ALTC programs and in furthering the values and aims of the ALTC within universities around Australia. Specific experiences and impacts varied depending on the institutional context as well as on the ways in which the PEI was designed and implemented within an institution.

The examination of final and evaluation reports found that the PEI worked most effectively within an institution when:

- alignment with the strategic directions of the university occurred;
- high level leadership was evident;
- there was distributed involvement through faculty structures;
- challenges inherent in the culture of an institution were well managed;
- there was additional institutional investment to the initiative; and
- a range of enhancement and implementation approaches were employed.

The points are not hierarchical or listed in any particular order of importance.

While the Stage One outcomes have focused on what has been reported in final and evaluation reports, we are interested in how the leadership was enacted/empowered within institutions to further the PEI cause. We believe the effectiveness of PEI was impacted on by the structural position of the initiative within an institution. The following questions seek your feedback about what we have presented in the summary document and your perceptions about the PEI more generally.

Validation

1. Do the outcomes reflect your experience?
2. What key issues, if any, do you believe have not been identified in the outcomes presented?

Structure and leadership

3. To what extent did the structural positioning of the PEI impact the effectiveness of teaching and learning programs that were introduced in your institution?
4. What positive influences did the PEI have on teaching and learning leadership within your institutions?

Sustainability

5. What challenges do you see lies ahead for sustainability of PEI programs?
6. Please describe two key PEI strategies that your institution has implemented that will be continued into the foreseeable future.

Appendix 5: Summative evaluation

Evaluation report on the project: 'Sustainable leadership of teaching and learning initiatives: lessons from the Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI)'.

Dr Elizabeth McDonald

2 February 2012

The contract for the evaluation of the project, 'Sustainable leadership of teaching and learning initiatives: lessons from the Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI)' began in early May 2011 and was due for completion by 27 February 2012. The project began in October 2010 so was well underway when I began as evaluator. With the announcement of the closure of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), the team discussed the best way to report on this work to ensure the maximum value from the project in the changed circumstances. The decision to rename the project report, 'Leading sustainable improvement in university teaching and learning: Lessons from the sector' arose from this review.

Evaluation brief

Evaluations can take many forms – in this case I was asked to provide a formative evaluation and a summative evaluation in the form of a final report.

According to the terms of reference for the external evaluator, the key functions and specifications were to:

- ascertain the strengths and challenges of the project management process
- identify and advise on the level of correlation between the project objectives and the realisation of specific outcomes
- assess the success of the project's dissemination strategies
- determine the utility and sustainability of the project deliverables
- provide an independent evaluation report outlining key findings and recommendations.

In negotiating the evaluation role, the project leader asked for a formative evaluation, one where value is added during the course of the project, as well as the final report required by the ALTC. The final report was to address the issues listed above. It was agreed that I attend a number of the project meetings and provide advice as appropriate, monitor progress and compliance with the project objectives, examine the deliverables from the project and assess these in terms of utility and sustainability and provide advice about the reporting requirements as appropriate.

I attended two face-to-face meetings and one teleconference meeting during the course of the project. In addition, there were conversations and emails about issues throughout the time of engagement. Towards the end of the project, I prepared a set of evaluation questions, which I provided to project team members and the project manager prior to a conversation with each of them by phone. Many of the insights in this report are those of the individual project team members and I thank them for their careful and thoughtful preparation for the interview.

There is a great deal of value in this level of engagement with a project. I believe it is helpful to the project to have an 'outsider' testing assumptions, processing and thinking with the team. It also offers the evaluator a deep insight into the operation and politics of a project. However, this degree of engagement with the project does have risks in that the team can begin to see the evaluator as part of their team. Further there is no longer the same distance and dispassionate summative evaluation of outcomes and deliverables, though there is far greater appreciation of what is possible in the project. The evaluator's judgments will address the possible rather than the ideal outcomes and deliverables from the project. The reader of this evaluation report should be aware of these challenges and also the background and likely bias of the evaluator.

About the evaluator

I was one of the initial leadership group at the ALTC in 2006, though I was involved the year before in preparation for the Council's establishment. My role encompassed responsibility for the grants programs from the beginning. As part of that role, I drafted the guidelines for all the grants programs including the later program, the Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI).

While this experience gives me an intimate knowledge of the PEI history and design, I have no personal experience of how the strategies that were designed in response to the ALTC program requirements actually played out in universities, other than from reading initial reports. I finished my contract at the ALTC in October 2009, before the final reports from the PEI were submitted.

Promoting Excellence Initiative

To understand this project it is important to be aware of the intended purpose of the PEI and something of the context in which it was developed. Prior to the establishment of the ALTC, there had been small amounts of government grant money available for teaching and learning in universities. On establishment in 2006, the ALTC made available over $10 million in grants and dramatically expanded the teaching and learning awards for university staff. As many of the universities, particularly the smaller ones, did not have the staff or the systems in place to support applications to the new programs, teaching and learning units were seriously strained in many universities.

The ALTC was concerned that success in applying for grants and awards could have rewarded those institutions with greater experience in the previous much smaller grant and award programs. To enable all institutions to strengthen their engagement, the ALTC offered each institution eligible for funding a grant of $220,000 over two to three years to implement a strategy of engagement with the ALTC. The intention was, that at the end of the three years, the institutions would maintain the most successful elements of their strategies.

Under the PEI program $9,420,000 was committed by the ALTC to 42 institutions. Through the PEI, the ALTC hoped to 'to act as a catalyst for the sustainable, long-term enhancement of learning and teaching and the maximisation of opportunities for effective dissemination and adaption of innovation and good practice'.
(http://www.altc.edu.au/promoting-excellence-initiative)

Universities were given considerable freedom in how they developed their strategies to support learning and teaching though they were required to do so with a particular focus on engaging and building on the work funded by the ALTC.

The ALTC supported the program with four annual meetings at which initiatives were shared and universities were briefed about future ALTC priorities. In addition, some universities formed groups and shared their approaches and resources.

It became evident that the smaller institutions, in particular, appreciated both the resources and the sharing of expertise. Over time, a broader base of institutions achieved success with the ALTC grants and awards programs. While many institutions saw the PEI as a 'project' rather than an 'institutional strategy' meant to embed long-term change supported by appropriate structures, there is some evidence from the findings of this project that universities have maintained at least some of the initiatives that were supported under the PEI.

The project – 'Leading sustainable improvement in university teaching and learning: Lessons from the sector'

One of my immediate observations when I read the proposal was that it did not comply with the leadership program criteria under which it was funded. It is not a project designed to build leadership capacity, rather it is a project designed to research the lessons learnt from an initiative that was focused on institutional strategy to enhance learning and teaching. While leadership was fundamental to the success of the university strategies, this project is not about building leadership capacity, but rather aims to use the PEI as a study or case to understand the leadership challenges faced in working to improve learning and teaching in universities. The project also aims to provide examples of successful initiatives.

It needs to be remembered that in examining a particular case, such as the PEI, the program itself may have an overlaying purpose that limits any understandings that can be drawn from the particular case. The PEI program had as its specific focus strengthening engagement between the universities and the ALTC and through this enhancing learning and teaching.

To further complicate matters, this project replaced a proposed evaluation of the PEI, though it was not designed as an evaluation, resulting in confused expectations from the project. An example of this can be found in the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Review: 'The ALTC has funded a project to do a meta-analysis of the outcomes of this initiative which will be used to inform its future' [1].

[1] The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Review (2011) is a report from the consultation conducted by Ms Alison Johns after the announcement of the closure of the ALTC to advise on the effectiveness of ALTC programs and 'innovative and effective ways to deliver the (ALTC) programs in the future' (p. 1). The report was accessed on 2 February 2012 at http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/Quality/Documents/HELearningTeachingReport.pdf

The project proposed to 'distil and highlight the leadership challenges faced by the leaders and champions of PEI and to feature as exemplars those initiatives that have had the most positive impact within an institution'. It planned to do this by looking at the way individual universities enacted the strategies to which they had committed in order to receive funding under the PEI. The broader purpose of the project was to use such findings to strengthen the efforts in universities to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Ultimately this latter objective was the one that became the focus of the project due to the changes that occurred during the life of the project including the closure of the ALTC.

The project when funded in October 2010 was approved with conditions. These conditions involved a reduction of the timeframe to 15 months and the inclusion of an additional partner. The ALTC wanted the findings quickly. The Council also asked for an additional partner in the project, Murdoch University. The original proposers of the project were from Deakin University, Queensland University of Technology, and Swinburne University. To accommodate these changes some additional funding was approved.

The Council decided to fund this project as an alternative to an evaluation of the PEI (informal conversation with ALTC). The ALTC asked for a discussion paper based on the universities final reports on the PEI to be submitted by the end of February 2011. Ultimately that timeframe was extended, as the ALTC was not able to supply the reports as quickly as predicted. The discussion paper became a summary paper and was approved for release in early June 2011.

The project was a very ambitious one, and made some assumptions about how people responding in interviews would articulate the links between leadership, strategy and success. Without this articulation it proved difficult to provide the proposed exemplars. The project design also assumed that it would be easy to find evidence and make the links between strategy, practice and improvements in learning and teaching. This was not the case.

Outcomes and deliverables compared to those proposed

One of the early deliverables was the summary report, *ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative: major themes of teaching and learning identified in completed institution project reports*, based on the final reports from universities of their PEI and the evaluations reports of those initiatives. The ALTC accepted this summary report and released it. This report gave an early indication of the general success of the PEI and formed a useful synthesis early in the project.

With the announcement of the closure of the ALTC and through ongoing project review, decisions were made to make some changes to the project along the way. These changes are documented in the final report on the project so I will not repeat them here. Suffice to say I was involved in the discussions about these changes and endorsed the decisions. I believe it is essential to maintain the broad project outcomes and that to do so may require considerable agility and re-design during the project. In the case of this project, I believe that there was an effective process of review and re-design that benefited the likely impact of the project.

The project's final report provides a useful overview of an integrated approach to assist universities to enhance learning and teaching. Evidence from the research conducted supports these findings, though is some areas more strongly than in others. While it is unlikely that any of these seven insights will be a surprise to the reader, the value of the project is in bringing them together based on the experience in Australian universities today. The short document should be of use in planning strategy and to draw attention to these issues among those who hold high-level responsibility for learning and teaching in universities.

Challenges in the project

The conditions imposed by the ALTC, a new partner and a reduced timeline, provided some early challenges for the project. These were resolved, though the introduction of a new partner did mean it took some time for an ease to develop in the way the group operated.

The early relationship development was further complicated by the lack of clarity about the discussion paper. The discussion paper which became the report 'ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative: major themes of teaching and learning identified in completed institution project reports' had no clear purpose at the outset. This lack of clarity resulted in a difficult process in shaping the report particularly as the analysis was undertaken at Murdoch University, the new partner, without a clear brief about what the report was intended to do.

An early discussion of how authorship of any products arising from the project will be dealt with could have reduced some early tension among the partners.

Due to the reduced timeline, there was an early push to gain ethics approval. The team were aware that for many projects gaining ethics approval has caused major delays. As the project developed, there were discussions about whether what had been approved under ethics clearance would allow a particular approach to be taken. If time had allowed, it would have been better to gain a stronger consensus within the team regarding the details of the research process, prior to ethics clearance.

Two other challenges occurred during the life of the project. One of the initial project leaders left the institution for a position in another State. The second challenge was that the Australian Government announced the closure of the ALTC. The project leadership change resulted in a period of distraction and unease as negotiations occurred on how to manage the change particularly given the tight timelines for the project and the key role the project leader had played in the design of the project.

The other change, the demise of the ALTC meant that energy in the sector was dissipated and the key audience for the work, the ALTC would no longer exist. Given this, the team reviewed the outcomes and deliverables that had been proposed in the initial project brief, and broadened these to accommodate a wider audience, with the approval of the Office for Learning and Teaching. A number of the team believe this change was one that strengthened the project, a position with which I agree, though if this had been the original concept shaping the project, there might have been some changes to the questions asked in the interviews and surveys and possibly in the design of the project.

Strengths of the project

The project was well managed and despite some major challenges it largely kept on track with timelines until near the end when an extension was required. The project team worked hard to deliver a well-researched report within the timeframe expected. Keeping to timelines demanded quite some effort with the change in leadership and towards the end with the resignation of the project manager. The existing infrastructure and systems at Deakin University assisted in quickly resolving the leadership issue and the willingness and expertise of Professor Marcia Devlin, a member of the team, who took on a major responsibility for the project and got the project back on track quickly. The fact that the project was being managed from an area with considerable experience in research projects around learning and teaching was invaluable at this crucial time.

The team worked well once the initial issues were resolved. The team brought complementary experience and skills which enabled a rich research methodology to be used to good effect, though there were levels of redundancy in the project that could have been addressed with a more sophisticated design. The analysis work undertaken early in the project by Murdoch University set an excellent framework for the project overall and though done under considerable time pressure provided an early deliverable and a strong background to the rest of the project.

Face-to-face meeting were important for the project for a number of reasons. The meetings:

- assisted in the building of relationships;
- captured concentrated time in the midst of busy roles;
- allowed the space for discussion when difficult issues needed to be addressed; and
- provided the opportunity to review and come to quick agreement on substantial issues.

While the face-to-face meetings were very important, some judicious use of off-line telephone hook-ups with individuals assisted in smoothing out the transition from one project leader to the next.

The links with the new Office for Learning and Teaching were established quickly and used to gain endorsement for changes to the project.

Dissemination

Within the project team there is expertise in dealing with the media and that has been used to the benefit of the project. Opportunities at conferences have also been used. In addition, the final national ALTC meeting for the PEI program provided a useful opportunity to share the evolving project findings and undertake some additional data testing. Funding has been set aside and plans exist for further dissemination of the final report and shorter document.

There are now opportunities with the establishment of TEQSA and the standards agenda to bring the work from this project into focus in universities, though these will need to be captured once both of these new national initiatives become clearer.

For this type of project, OLT has a role in the dissemination of the findings with its links to universities and government.

Possible improvements

Greater depth of investigation might have been possible if time had permitted, as there would have been the potential to build on insights from one research process in designing questions for the next. This sort of design requires time especially with the need to build in ethics approval. For this project, the funding conditions did not allow for a more extended project.

I acknowledge the time pressures on this project, yet despite this, it is clear from the comments of members of the team, there was room for a greater clarification of roles, contributions and developing protocols at the beginning of the project.
A number of the project team believed that more constructive use could have been made of the reference group. The feedback from the reference group was sought on a couple of occasions during the project. Reference group feedback on the final report was valuable to the project team.

Lessons of value to other projects

1. It is particularly important, if a partner not involved in the design of the project joins a project, that time is spent building a very clear understanding of the purpose, shape and audience for any work to be undertaken especially by a new partner.

2. Projects need to spend time right at the beginning coming to an agreement about roles, contributions, authorship of papers and other protocols and document these. The team should revisit these on a regular basis throughout the life of the project to ensure these agreements are still understood and useful.

3. While case study design is useful, its limitations need to be examined carefully so that there is clarity about what the research based on a particular case or group of cases can reasonably hope to establish.

Conclusion

This project has been beset by change. Despite this, the team have prepared a valuable report and a set of findings, which offer both insight into the current challenges to enhancing learning and teaching in universities and some ways forward in terms of addressing these challenges.


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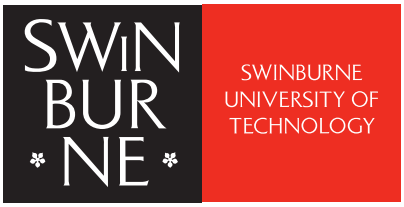
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