

A national approach to promoting & enhancing
excellence in learning and teaching

NIAD-UE Seminar, 8 December 2010

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Outline of presentation



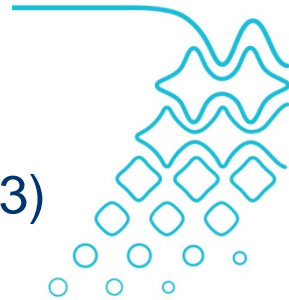
1. Australian developments in enhancing & promoting teaching & learning
2. Introduction to the Australian Learning & Teaching Council (ALTC)
3. Teaching & Learning Standards
4. ALTC Learning & Teaching Standards Project

Australian Context



- Long history of national organisations dedicated to enhancing learning & teaching
 - Committee for Advancement of University Teaching (1992-1996)
 - Committee for University Teaching & Staff Development (1997-1999)
 - Australian Universities Teaching Committee (2000-2004)
- Managed within the Commonwealth/federal department
- Limited funding sources - \$1 million maximum for AUTC

What is the ALTC?



- *Backing Australia's Future* Higher Education Reforms (2003)
 - Establishment of a national institute for learning and teaching in higher education
 - Funding of \$24.6 million AUD from 2006
- Carrick Institute established in 2004
- Government owned agency (company) with independent Board
- Renamed Australian Learning & Teaching Council in 2008
- Based in Sydney; approximately 35 staff
- 46 eligible institutions – universities, other institutions receiving Commonwealth funding for higher education places

ALTC Goals



- Name deliberate positioning of learning first, teaching second
- Enhance the status & centrality of teaching in universities
- Enhance scholarship of teaching & learning
- Contribute to effective & transformative national learning & teaching policies
- Enhance quality of learning experiences for students
- Benchmark learning & teaching nationally & internationally
- Remit to focus on academic standards

ALTC 2010



- Suite of programs & services
 - Innovation & Development Grants – priorities & ‘blue sky’
 - Strategic Priority Projects – national issues of significance
 - Leadership for Excellence in Learning & Teaching – grants & professional development
 - National Teaching Fellowships
 - Australian Awards for University Teaching & Citations
 - Resources Library – website

Biggest Challenges



- Dissemination of project outcomes – breadth, sustained - getting more value from project outcomes
- Sector & institution wide impact versus individual impact
- Reaching those academics who don't care about high quality teaching & graduate outcomes – not just communicating with the 'converted'
- Positioning learning & teaching as central to higher education within a culture that prioritises research
- Addressing government priorities & sector priorities

Teaching & Learning Standards



- TEQSA to evaluate performance of higher education providers against a Standards Framework
- Teaching & Learning standards a key element
- Issues still to be decided:
 - How best to evaluate the performance of providers in relation to teaching & learning standards?
 - How will teaching & learning standards be developed?
 - How will the standards be used by TEQSA?

Teaching & Learning Standards



- Accountability for public funding – requires a systematic approach to articulation & monitoring of educational standards
- Inputs are important but not enough – outcomes focus
- Maintenance of standards:
 - Clear & public articulation of standards
 - Assessment of student achievement against standards – internal & external validation of assessment
 - Monitoring of compliance with standards
- Academic standards – defined as learning outcomes described in terms of core discipline knowledge and skills

ALTC Learning & Teaching Standards Project



- Demonstration project commissioned by DEEWR in late 2009
- 8 Discipline scholars working with discipline stakeholder groups
- Define Threshold Learning Outcomes for specified levels of selected higher education degree programs within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- Demonstrate one approach to development of learning & teaching standards & provide suggestions for possible future approaches
- Provide TEQSA with input to inform its decisions about how to evaluate learning & teaching standards within a standards framework

Selected Discipline Areas



- Architecture & Building: Bachelor & Masters by coursework in Architecture; Bachelor of Construction Management
- Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities: Bachelor degree with major in History; major in Geography
- Business, Management & Economics: Bachelor and Masters of Accounting
- Creative & Performing Arts: Bachelor & Masters by coursework – generic
- Engineering & ICT: Bachelor of Engineering
- Health, Medicine & Veterinary Science: Entry level professional
- Law: Bachelor of Laws
- Science: Bachelor & Honours - Chemistry & Mathematics

Standards Development Stages



1. Established reference/advisory group
2. Draft a set of threshold Learning Outcomes based on the AQF and other work (Australian & international accreditation standards, Tuning project, UK subject benchmarks)
3. Feedback from key stakeholder groups
4. Engaged broader discipline communities
5. Revised draft Learning Outcomes
6. Support/endorsement of final Learning Outcomes
7. Dissemination to discipline communities
8. Maintenance mechanisms

Project Outcomes



- Report to DEEWR & TEQSA in December 2010
 - Threshold Learning Outcomes
 - Evaluation of the demonstration project
 - Suggestions for sustainable approach beyond LTAS
- Booklets for each Discipline
 - Consultation & development process
 - Nature & extent of discipline
 - Threshold learning outcomes for discipline
 - Explanatory notes

What have we learned?



- Discipline communities can work very well together – quality outcomes likely just from increased collaboration
- Great stimulus for curriculum review & renewal
- Internal & external validation of assessment require more attention across the sector
- Such a process generates better knowledge & understanding of quality issues across academic workforce
- Effective way of engaging professional bodies & employer groups

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