Creating Excellence in the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning

2009 Snapshots

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EDITORS
CREATING EXCELLENCE IN THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING & LEARNING

Telling stories

Mia O’Brien and Nev Smith and I were having a coffee at Merlos, in the Great Court, outside the Duhig Building. I was reminiscing about how sixty years ago my dear old dad had been in the first bunch of students to use the Forgan Smith Building here on the St Lucia campus.

When I tell my dad about what we do at UQ these days, and about amazing places like the Advanced Concepts Teaching Space in the Sir Llew Edwards Building, and about how students no longer wear academic gowns to lectures, he’s just gob-smacked.

And then Mia and Nev and I asked ourselves the question: How do we tell our colleagues about all the exciting things that happen in UQ classrooms (sorry, learning spaces) these days?

You see, dissemination of good practice is really important. And, as an old hack who began in journalism doing paste up on Semper thirty five years ago, I only know one way. That’s by letting people tell their own stories.


So here, for Teaching & Learning Week 2009, are a bunch of stories about what people are currently doing in learning and teaching at UQ. There is lots happening in T&L Week, and this is just our little contribution.

Why did we do it? Because we can. We didn’t ask permission. We just did it because we are passionate about good teaching. We hope you find the stories interesting and inspirational.

John Harrison
on behalf of Mia, Nev and David.

Like UQ’s famous jacarandas, Teaching Week is a spectacular showcase of colour, but all year round the trees continue to grow.
Dear Colleagues,

The University of Queensland has committed to supporting a community of academics who are given the time, resources and freedom to engage seriously with the scholarship of teaching. We have committed to providing these staff with a career path that has standards of achievement at each level comparable to those established for teaching and research academics.

The potential benefits to the university are considerable. We are the first Australian university to introduce such a category of academic, and in turn to acknowledge and value the important place of teaching scholarship in the enhancement of student learning. We also want to acknowledge that great teaching takes place at the chalkface. The aim of this e-zine is to showcase the innovative and diverse activities of the many people dedicated to excellent teaching and learning at UQ.

We are well placed to lead developments in the scholarship of teaching in Australia, just as we have done in research, through provision of the appropriate nurturing environment; and through the cultivation of a collaborative culture and community of practice.

The scholarship of teaching is an evolving idea, not just in Australia but internationally. Having taken a lead, we need to be ready to contribute to the many debates around, for example, how we evaluate the quality and impact of work in the scholarship of teaching, about the interface with pedagogical research and with scholarly teaching, and about the future leadership roles that our teaching focused academics can make. I am sure that this e-zine will provide a valuable mechanism for bringing teaching scholars together, will act as a forum for discussion and debate, and I look forward to the next part of the journey at UQ.

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I’d like to extend my warmest congratulations to all the academic staff whose stories appear in this innovative ezine.

The ezine is a tangible product of TEDI’s CESoTL program – truly “celebrating excellence in the scholarship of teaching and learning”. CESoTL is funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council’s Promoting Excellence initiative, which aims to engage universities in the full range of programs the ALTC offers.

At UQ we believe in growing our own teaching and learning champions, and in these pages, whether you view them online or in print, you’ll see plenty of evidence of the thriving culture of excellence and innovation in teaching and learning that has been UQ’s trademark for many years. The sheer diversity and creativity of UQ’s teachers never cease to amaze and impress me, so I hope you find in these pages ideas that will inspire you to try something new yourselves.

I must also thank Dr Mia O’Brien, Dr Daivid Geelan and Nev Smith, who coordinate the CESoTL program for TEDI, and Dr John Harrison, who lent us his expertise in producing this ezine. I look forward to reading many more of your stories in future editions.

Merrilyn Goos (Director of TEDI)
Students have been on a mission, the last few weeks, to find one of those questions to which everyone wants an answer - and by everyone we include children in the early throes of education.

The students are part of the first cohort studying the new Bachelor of Education program at UQ, St Lucia. They are coming to the end of their first year and are tackling one that the major controversies in education; “What is appropriate science and technology to learn in the primary years?” In the last few months the Queensland Government has acted on the controversial Masters Report and there are weekly news stories about the Federal Government’s national curriculum project.

Everyone loves a good myth-busting story! Around the country school students have been exercising their minds carrying out investigations for science and technology fairs that run in the smallest schools and at the national-level at the BHP Billiton Science Awards.

Learning and participating in such an event is an ideal way for education students to focus on the things they have been exploring about science, about how science works and how children learn science. “We have increased the challenge for our students by demanding their investigations not only cover the science but have a quantitative dimension, drawing in aspects of literacy and numeracy as well.” says Dr Tony Wright the course coordinator.

“It is astonishing how creative students are when given the opportunity. It is a form of creativity that is invaluable in the classroom. Part of it involves thinking at the child’s level and coming up with practical ideas.”

Part of the success of the project relies on flexible communication. The use of wikis and the range of communication technologies is a special interest of senior tutor, Michelle Mukherjee, who is currently completing her PhD studying technology implementation in schools.
Clinic observations taught me that small things matter and must not be overlooked."

"The research project was good especially because of teamwork, this is I think what I learnt the most. Division of tasks, it worked well. Thank you for this opportunity for a great experience."

"I realised as an EP, in order to succeed as a professional, I must first acquire the experience of “walking in the shoes” of my patients.”

"I learnt that effective communication is a combination of verbal and non-verbal aspects; in particular, the application of a neutral stance, improving my voice projection can benefit me greatly as an evolving professional"

These are comments from our first year dentistry and oral health students this year, who were exposed to a series of deliberate experiences aimed at engaging students, enhancing self-awareness, developing desirable professional attributes such as critical reflective skills, collaborative team skills, confident and effective communication and community-awareness and impacting on students' development as evolving professionals (EPS).

The Evolving Professional (EP) concept is a culture and a curriculum framework that recognizes students as EPs within a community of practice and aims to empower students, guide student learning and development (their ways of thinking, learning and being an oral health professional), encourage inquiry and excellence and enable a smoother transition from students to work-ready professionally attuned clinicians.

This year, EP teams consisting of first year EPs and senior EPS in other year levels were formed to facilitate peer support and mentoring. The EP teams held reflective group discussions in-class and online via EP blogs, on various aspects of clinical practice and professional development and shared with each other learning experiences that made an impact on them.

First year EPs also had the opportunity to observe their senior EP buddies “in action” in their clinical sessions. Insights and interactions
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**gained from these provided different perspectives and encouraged inquiry and learning within a supportive community of practice.**

First year EPs had the opportunity to conduct a research project in small groups in the first semester. This experience provided the opportunity to develop collaborative team skills, connect with other health professionals, apply confident and effective communication skills and add to their construction of knowledge and understanding of oral health beliefs and practices.

Creative experiences were implemented in the second semester to enhance student engagement, impact on students' professional socialization and learning. First year EPs participated in a confidence in drama workshop facilitated by a performing arts expert which aimed to develop confidence and effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills through voice, dance, drama techniques. EPs also participated in a collaborative team skills workshop facilitated by an art therapist which involved groups of students using paints to express their perceptions of themselves as EPs. This workshop aimed to develop collaborative team skills, reflective skills, effective communication and self-awareness.

First year EPs also participated in the Go-Volunteer activity which involved students spending 1hr of their time at a designated community organisation, helping and interacting with those in less privileged circumstances. Students applied skills gained from other experiences to their Go-Volunteer activity and found the experience enriching. As one student puts it: "I was extremely hesitant, sceptical and apprehensive to start with but came away with my eyes and mind opened, confidence improved and perspectives changed."
Transforming theoretical concepts into accessible ways of thinking using scenario-based pedagogy: a case study in statistics

Mia O’Brien, TEDI and Carl Sherwood, School of Economics

This study aimed to test if a scenario-based pedagogy could assist student learning in an introductory statistics course. Learning statistics continues to present significant challenges to student learning largely as a result of the difficulties students encounter in grappling with abstract concepts they find troublesome to learn (Land, Cousin, Meyer, and Davies, 2005; Perkins, 2006).

A set of scenarios were designed to specifically support students’ access to, and consequent use of, key theoretical concepts in introductory statistics. The scenarios addressed concepts relating to the normal distribution, sampling distributions, confidence intervals, and hypothesis testing.

An important feature in each scenario is the use of simple pictorial icons to represent complex mathematical concepts and formulae. These pictorial icons and their meanings were found to be readily adopted and used by students, and in turn, enabled them to better master complex mathematical concepts.

This is a transformative process allowing students to grasp threshold concepts (Meyer and Land, 2006). The authentic settings enabled direct application of learning to solve real world problems with greater understanding. Furthermore, intentionally linking the scenario topics allows students to make connections between different topics that may previously have seemed unconnected (Meyer and Land, 2005).

The pictorial icons further relate to the notion of a threshold concept by being bounded and relating to a particular conceptual space (Cousin, 2006). These pictorial icons could be equally used in other subjects and not solely confined to statistical concepts.

Importantly, as noted by Cousin (2006), this observation ensures the approach is not merely a form of disciplinary property but allows for a more research minded approach toward mastering threshold concepts. The scenario-based learning and teaching designs were adapted to incorporate an online software program called Scenario Based Learning Interactive (SBLi).
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To assess the impact of this approach an experimental design entailing two student co-horts within an undergraduate economics statistics course was implemented. Students were allocated to one of two tutorial classes: the first used existing, traditional teaching methods in statistics; the second used the scenario-based approach.

Data was collected from both groups. A pencil and paper real world scenario problem was administered to all students at the beginning of the semester. This same scenario was administered at the end of semester to test for mastery of important concepts.

Results indicate that students from the scenario-based classes achieved greater gains in understanding questions relating to course concepts, and scored higher overall in a final exam, than those participating in the existing, traditional class.

Using simple pictorial icons to represent complex mathematical concepts and formulae, threshold concepts are believed to be irreversible, and once understood, are transformative and difficult to unlearn (Meyer and Land, 2006).

This study appears to demonstrate a positive effect in scenario-based pedagogies that foreground and promote the learning (and teaching) of threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge.
Experiential approach to learning: A win-win situation through working in teams

Caroline Wong, UQ Business School

As part of the New Staff Start-Up (SoTL) grant, a research and learning initiative has been designed in course MGT53611: Working in Teams that revolved around team work and a business product project. This is a project in the course done in collaboration with Young Achievement Australia (YAA) which is a national, independent, not-for-profit organization that facilitates business programs between industry and young Australians. This project challenges students in a competitive business situation, assisting in the development of employability skills and key competencies.

The aim of this initiative is to investigate the effect of team processes on entrepreneur learning and to isolate actors that facilitate or inhibit the development of entrepreneur skills in student teams. There is limited research that examines the process by which students become entrepreneurs. A review of literature also suggests that while there are studies on entrepreneurial learning, there is limited research on the use of teaching methods that facilitate the development of students’ entrepreneur skills.

This study fills the gap by examining the processes of developing entrepreneur skills within the team context in the Business School. It is expected that the findings from this study will assist higher education teachers to develop a better quality course curriculum that is geared towards the production of highly motivated and capable student-entrepreneurs who will go on to become effective entrepreneurs in the real world, and to assist in promoting increased student engagement in higher education curriculum and more particularly at the UQ Business School.

This project has culminated in two student teams launching and selling their business products on market day at St Lucia. The two products were: a calico bag with the University of Queensland logo on it and student saver coupon. The dynamics of the team and their interactions were observed and recorded (through videotaping) in the weekly meetings. Additionally, surveys were completed by all student participants three times (T1, T2 and T3) during the semester and an interview conducted at the end of the
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semester. The students’ experiential processes were also captured through their reflec-
tions in the learning journal.

An early glimpse of the surveys and analysis of the interviews indicated that more than
90% of the students had a very positive experience about the effectiveness of the team
processes in undertaking this real business venture. In the process, they learned about
their own strengths and weaknesses and the extent of shared understanding of team
members in terms of the capabilities and differences each member brings to the team.
More importantly, the project has given them a glimpse of the challenges involved in
starting a business which include a need for effective communication, commitment,
motivation, hard work and long hours, being flexible with plans and having a plan B
when things go wrong. An excerpt from one of the team members summed up the
learning experience succinctly:

“The project shows us all the setbacks you can incur in business. I learned that there is a
number of things you actually have to do to run a successful business – how to create a
product, how to market a product and create a target audience and how to effec-
tively sell the product in the end.”

The experiences brought in by the industry mentors added another dimension to their
entrepreneurial learning which has been invaluable in bringing their products from crea-
tion to the point of sales as illustrated in the following excerpt:

“We realized we were not getting anywhere with our business. Evan (one of the men-
tors) came along and save the day. He gave us suggestions on how to make the prod-
uct works based on what we have and the resources we have and how we could still
go back to what we wanted originally in the product. So instead of having a page of
student discount vouchers, we landed up with a booklet based on the number of busi-
nesses that we have gotten.”

By the time the two teams concluded
their businesses, they realized that not all
budding businesses are necessarily re-
warded with success. However, it has
been a worthwhile journey as this project
allows them to explore, experiment and
experience real business venture in line
with the theories of team work that they
learned in this course.
UQ takes the national stage in health teamwork innovation

Emma Poulsen, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences,
Monica Moran, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences,
Rosalie Boyce, School of Pharmacy,
Lisa Nissen, School of Pharmacy

Staff from the University of Queensland (UQ) have inspired universities from across Australia to explore creative approaches to incorporate teamwork into the learning experience for health sciences students. The HealthFusion Team Challenge (OzHFTC), a landmark interprofessional education activity for students, was hosted by UQ on Friday 7 August.

The OzHFTC is a lively public competition between inter-professional final-year student teams, drawn from a range of professions. The student teams work together and independently over several weeks, to develop a management plan for a client with complex needs that reflects national health priorities. The ultimate aim of this program is to prepare graduates for the changing workforce, equipping them to provide optimum client care.

Dr Monica Moran (Health & Rehabilitation Sciences), one of the HCTC project directors, said the OzHCTC represented the culmination of several years work by the Faculty to promote inter-professional education in health faculties throughout Australia.

“UQ held the first teamwork challenge in 2007 for UQ students only and we invited other universities to observe the 2008 event, which created a lot of interest. In 2009, we had five universities from across Australia submit teams to compete, with a total of 19 Universities taking part in the planning process.

Two of the teams that participated in the OzHFTC also ran local events as part of a preliminary selection process, with consultation from the HealthFusion Team,” she said.
The OzHTC is currently the only public event of its type in the world with the 2009 event bringing in over 450 high school students, university academics, university students and non-university health professionals in the audience.

“The event was a huge success not only for the students competing in the challenge but also for the audience. Some lecturers at UQ saw the opportunity to create learning and teaching activities around the event and in doing so, exposed several hundred students to a unique learning experience.

It was great to see learning taking place on both sides of the stage,” Dr Moran said.

The 2009 OzHTC involved teams from five universities and spectators from several others. Teams from Curtin University of Technology, Griffith University, Monash University and Queensland University of Technology competed against UQ in front of a panel of expert judges from the health professions. Observers from the University of Melbourne, University of Canberra and Bond University also travelled to Brisbane to view the event.

The guest MCs for the evening were Mr Brady Schulz and Miss Natalie Comas who both participated as final year students in the first UQ Team Challenge in 2007. They returned as successful health professionals to host the event and reflect on the value of inter-professional practice in their professional lives.

Dr Moran reflected “it is wonderful to see that the team skills developed in an event such as this are carried through into the workforce and practically applied.” Preparations are currently underway for hosting an international competition in April next year in Sydney, as part of the All Together Better Health Conference 5, an international IPE conference. To date there is interest from United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Thailand, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

More information on HealthFusion events can be found at www.healthfusionteamchallenge.com
Supporting the transition from secondary to tertiary study in the Bachelor of Arts

Fred D’Agostino, Assistant Dean – Academic, Faculty of Arts

Since the 2005 Review of the UQ Bachelor of Arts program, the Faculty has been engaged (with help from TEDI, Student Services, and Student Recruitment) in identifying issues and opportunities in relation to the transition between secondary and tertiary study.

Initially, the impetus for these enquiries was the high attrition from UQ’s BA program. Gradually, we learned that much of this attrition was, in some sense, unproblematic. Students were in good academic standing and had simply used the BA at UQ as an “upgrading” platform to programs at other universities—just as students at other universities use their programs as upgrading platforms into UQ’s BA.

(We are in discussion with senior staff at Griffith and QUT to further probe this phenomenon, which we call “churning” and which is, by hypothesis, an artifact of Queensland’s tertiary entrance system in which, uniquely in Australia, students can improve their tertiary entrance score through university-level study.)

Our enquiries have involved interviewing about two-dozen head teachers (typically of English and History) at the top “feeder” schools for the BA. From these site visits and from our conversations, we have developed the hypothesis that genuine transitional difficulties (as opposed to simple “attrition” or “churning”) are in some significant measure a result of the disparity between the cultural context for learning at schools on the one hand and in the UQ BA on the other hand.

In particular, schools are small-scale, emotionally supportive, and highly scheduled places of learning with low student/staff ratios and student-centred pedagogies and assessment practices, whereas at the University, students encounter a large-scale, relatively anonymous situation where their timetable is much freer and where, accordingly, they have to schedule their own out-of-class activities. Student focus groups and surveys confirm that students are aware of and attribute significance to these differences. In addition, students have identified health, financial, time management, careers outcomes, and social networks as significant factors in their own experience and success.

We are currently engaged in developing, with Student Services, and with a supporting HEESP grant, an add-on module for our BA First Year Community website (serving about 2000 students per year). This module will enable students to “self assess” for “risk factors” and will carry, through the student voice itself, the message of taking responsibility for your own educational opportunities.
The French@UQ Learning Community. Engagement, interaction and independent learning through a discipline-based community website

Greg Hainge, Languages & Comparative Cultural Studies

Within the BA program, as the student cohort increases, the potential for individual consultation with students risks decreasing. This situation is particularly problematic for the delivery of the teaching and learning of a foreign language course where the students’ perspective is crucial.

Whilst the BA first-year community blackboard site can help address the risks of attrition associated with this situation at the first year level, there was a need to expand beyond this and create a community site that would unite a body of students not according to their year level but, rather, their subject choice.

With the increasing complexity of student’s degree structures, the push towards internationalization and increased student mobility via overseas exchange programs and the ever greater number of opportunities available to students, my idea was to create a discipline-based community site that could, in the first instance, serve as a one-stop shop for information regarding all of this and more.

Realising that a community is not imposed from the top down but, rather, built by all of its members, it was however important that some of this information come directly from students when they were the best source of information. To this end, exchange blogs were set up for students on or returning from exchange to inform their colleagues about subject choices, accommodation hunting and the frustrations of French bureaucracy!

As the site developed further, however, I wished to carry this concept further and see if the site could be used to generate pedagogical materials that were not linked to a specific course, but only to the subject area of French.

This was done by embedding external social networking applications (Facebook and Twitter) into the Blackboard site. The thinking behind this is to capitalize on the large amounts of time students spend using such applications and see if the videos and soundbites that they seek out on the internet can actually become learning tools if the clips chosen are in the language they are learning. Not only have students done this, they have also posted Youtube videos to the Facebook group wall with comments that show how to learn something from them.

Through focus groups and online surveys, the site is also being evaluated by its end users (the students) and feedback sought for its further development. Whilst more top-down pedagogical materials for the site are being created in response to this feedback, it will be important for the site to retain a very distinct profile and identity from Blackboard sites linked to specific French courses and to adhere to its core aim of building a sense of a learning community amongst students. With this in mind, it is hoped that one of the next steps in the further development of this online community will be to close the loop, use the site to get students offline and build a greater sense of a physical community amongst students at all levels and stages of their French learning career.
Bringing undergraduate research into the chemistry laboratory

Gwendolyn Lawrie, Denise Adams and Joanne Blanchfield
School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences

One of the goals in delivering 1st level chemistry to large diverse cohorts (>1000 students) is the provision of a series of learning activities that both engage and challenge students. However, the traditional laboratory experiment is typically designed to incorporate opportunities for students to acquire competencies in core chemical techniques while gaining basic skills in presentation of data. The provision of traditional recipe-based experiments in which students’ complete white spaces in the prelab, results and post lab sections of printed handouts has evolved to reduce the cognitive load on students who may have had limited exposure to the chemical laboratory.

However, this heavily scaffolded structure also results in the disengagement of students who have had significant prior exposure to practical aspects of chemistry during their secondary education.

To re-engage and challenge these students, two ‘CASPIE’ undergraduate research modules have been adapted for the UQ context and implemented through a
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collaborative partnership with researchers in the Centre for Authentic Science Practice in Education at Purdue University. In these research modules, students work through a skill building phase to encounter the concepts, manipulative skills and practical process skills that underpin the experiments. They then take responsibility for their data and develop skills in experimental design, the processing of their data and critical evaluation. There have been multiple learning benefits including:

- Engagement of students in the learning cycle through iteration of experiments and modifying procedures.
- There is no predetermined experimental result (unlike the ‘right answers’ that students strive to achieve in traditional lab exercises).
- Feedback is provided to the students on their progress through summative assessment at the end of the skill building phase which informs their research phase and is a critical aspect of their learning process.
- Students experience being part of a ‘research group’ as they work to solve problems with their peers and are able to interact and send their data to the researcher whose work has inspired the module.
- They become less reliant on the tutor to guide them and develop a shared understanding of the role of an experiment.
- Students gain an appreciation for the nature of science.

The pilot program was completed in 2008 through implementation of the CASPIE Solar Cell research module based on the work of Purdue researcher, A/Prof Choi. In 2009, we have added a second Purdue-CASPIE module in 1st year but have also designed our own UQ-grown module inspired by the research of UQ chemists Dr Joanne Blanchfield and Prof James de Voss.

This has been implemented in a 2nd level chemistry course. To support the learning experience, students have participated in dedicated PASS groups which focus on aspects of practical processes.

We have evidence that this discourse and sharing their ideas with other students has been important in enabling these students to reshape their notion of ‘being a scientist’. There has been substantial positive feedback from students and two who completed the modules in 2008 have returned to be PASS leaders for the 2009 cohort.
Religion Bazaar-Immersive learning in second life

Helen Farley and Rick Strelan
School of History, Philosophy, Classics and Religion

This course previously followed a traditional thirteen week structure of a two hours lecture and one hour tutorial per week. The demand for competency based learning and the changing demographics of student cohorts requires a different approach to teaching and learning.

Within the small discipline specifics there is a need to maintain contemporary relevance and evolve in teaching and learning processes and curriculum design.

Recent feedback from postgraduates for a more interactive teaching and learning style required us as academics to 'step outside' and micro inspect 'how' and 'what' we offer in student learning experiences.

From this change initiative has been the introduction of a religious teaching and learning course program in which students experience through the virtual world of 2nd Life (http://secondlife.com/). This was designed to provide students with a greater opportunity to engage in and comprehend the different meanings of religion, and diverse religious experiences.

It also aligns well with the principles of flexible and blended learning with a virtual world that is interactive and engaging, raising student interest and negating student attrition rates. We trialled three introductory courses with a majority of students hailing from the BA program and having diverse learning and social backgrounds.
CREATING EXCELLENCE IN THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

We found it provided students with a more authentic and immersive learning experience which had increased their understanding of religion itself as well as religious practice. What was very encouraging was the ability to address and reach the increasing distance student cohort population through the medium of this flexible teaching and learning approach.

It facilitated encouragement for students to adapt and undertake more of a first person role and develop empathic skills to view lived experience from different 'religious' view of life/ethos perspectives. Whilst undertaking the course we found that students undertook a process of discovery and learning as each subsequent phase was informed by those before it.

This process also included ourselves as teaching and learning facilitators of the course. One exciting and innovative aspect was that guest lecturers were a part of the immersive culture of the virtual world that 2nd Life brings and not just associated with traditional learning environments where students have very little consistent interactive learning experiences.

It also introduced a new compound into the curriculum with the examining of religion in cyber space, drawing comparisons and contrasts between religious practice online and traditional forms of religious practice.

We intend to forge future collaborations within the established community of UQ in using this technology for the purpose of shared successes and strategies. We will initiate as well as maintain political support from key structural areas to establish or sustain momentum for this project whilst acknowledging the consideration of the resources and technology available for access that complies with the aims and goals of this type of immersive learning program. There is always the consideration of the resources and technology available for access that complies with the aims and the goals of this type of immersive learning program.

But the exciting and challenging issue it provides for us as academics are the new opportunities for working with post-graduates and distance education students with the ultimate aim of the synergy of technology and software to be made more seamless for the enhancement of student focused learning engagement.
Problem-based learning in medicine

Terry Tunny, School of Biomedical Sciences

The University of Queensland’s Medical Program is the largest in Australia. In our problem-based learning (PBL) medical course, student learning is developed weekly around specific clinical cases. The outcome which medical educationalists strive for is the development of a safe and effective medical practitioner.

Clinical reasoning skills are made up of three components, an assimilation of patient information and history, an ability to apply biomedical sciences knowledge to the diagnosis and management, and the medical officer’s clinical experience with similar cases in the past. A medical student’s clinical experience is obviously very limited early in their studies and they must rely heavily on the other two components.

Because of the breadth and integrated nature of medicine, new strategies to assist the students in their understanding and application of clinically relevant physiological concepts are needed. In one of our current projects, we are seeking to improve the integration of biomedical sciences into the medical program and the ability of students to apply it, through a valuable and enjoyable e-learning experience in our year 1 and 2 medical student cohorts.

This will be achieved by developing and extending their overall applied content knowledge and reasoning skills by teaching and testing the understanding of biomedical sciences, specifically physiology, in clinical context, through an interactive e-learning delivery platform utilizing the University of Queensland’s self-directed learning platform.

The project has been successfully trialled in Year 1 and Year 2 cohorts and both groups have very favourably reported their perceptions of the module which they can access from home, as very helpful in consolidating their understanding of the cardiovascular system (the first body system examined).

They found that the formative testing associated with the module in the form of propositional questioning and reasoning testing in the cardiovascular area was both challenging and of significant benefit to them. There was a significant improvement in propositional testing scores in the student groups who completed the module for both first and second year students.

The study has provided significant new information and preliminary findings were presented at the Australian and New Zealand Medical Education Conference in July this year. The project findings continue to be analysed and new modules for other body systems are currently being prepared.

The cardiovascular module has been imbedded into the physiology teaching program for the medical students at UQ. This project directly supports the Faculty of Sciences commitment in close alignment with Health Sciences to the continuing improvement in the educational development of medical students at the University of Queensland.
Wrestling with threshold concepts in occupational therapy curriculum redesign

Sylvia Rodger and Merrill Turpin
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

While completing the self study modules for accreditation of our programs in 2004-2005, we identified significant gaps in our existing processes of curriculum design and within our educational philosophy.

At the time there was a lack of theory underpinning appropriate educational decision making, leading to inconsistent use of terminology and a range of theoretical approaches being used by different staff. Students were having difficulty grasping some key concepts and struggled with their identity as occupational therapists.

We identified a list of troublesome knowledge across the programs and synthesized five key themes that were eventually validated as threshold concepts. These became pivotal to curriculum redesign for both undergraduate and masters entry level programs.

The utilisation of threshold concepts has revolutionised the way curriculum is mapped and key information is taught in Occupational Therapy.

We have achieved a greater focus on an integrated approach to curriculum design and making explicit links in all of our courses related to the ‘core knowledge’ students are expected to have mastered upon completion of the degree.

We have a shared language and views about key concepts as opposed to independent approaches taken by various course coordinators.

We hope that this will ultimately lead more uniform teaching and learning practices over the program.

As a staff team we have developed deeper knowledge about educational theories that underpin student learning within the context of professional programs. This Teaching and Learning Grant enabled us to continue the momentum for change and the development of a blueprint for our redesigned curriculum.
Creating ‘a site of cultural interaction’

Jean-Louis Durand, School of Political Science and International Studies

One of the many rewards that flows from writing about one’s teaching is that the writer becomes a reflective observer of the way s/he engages in T&L activities. Another reward is the discovery of the transformative effect that a particular T&L activity, possibly one unintended at first and specifically designed to meet the specific demands of a course, can have on the individual student.

I have kept an audio-visual record of some of my teaching sessions and viewing, hearing, studying and thinking hard about them have pointed to aspects of my teaching that 1) I had not been aware of while teaching, and 2) were well worth writing about, replicating in other courses and disciplines, and developing further.

My main T&L approach and object can be grasped in the phrase intercultural learning. The approach was used in the capstone elective POLS3202, The Foreign Policy of the Great Powers, whereby each two-hour lecture was followed by a 90 minute case study on the country studied that week. By involving lecturers from non-Anglo-Saxon cultural backgrounds or from another discipline, and engaging with them in a rhetorical joust, an unexpected light was shed onto each case.

The gist of the moment was to incorporate into the students’ thinking new intercultural and/or interdisciplinary elements, and thus to open their minds to the validity and reality of other perspectives. The sessions took the individual student to a higher plane of cultural understanding and made her a more mature person, one more apt to make culturally-informed professional decision and choices.

In this context, cultural diversity refers to a method of teaching that integrates ‘an international / intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service function’ (Knight 2004) that takes both as its focus and outcome deepened intercultural awareness. As such, and following Barker and Crichton (2008) this particular course became a ‘site of intercultural interaction’ in which students were challenged to renegotiate their perception of self and of others.

Engaging in front of a class with a spokesperson from another culture or discipline in a duel of perspectives exposes students to systems of representations with which they are unfamiliar. Discovering another reality not only disrupts several of their previously unquestioned given and several of the thought patterns that they considered universally accepted, but it also enriches their intellect, sharpens their critical thinking and most importantly broadens their worldview.

Thus they learn that their self is a situated cultural being and itself an example of cultural diversity, as progressively, they develop intercultural competencies and an ability to evaluate conflicting intercultural perspectives which requires abandoning some a
priori which they had not thought of previously as a priori. Realising their own situatedness draws out and challenges the student’s conceptions of the world, and as Jonathan Crichton and Angela Scarino have discovered, such developments invite the learner to reflect self-critically on their knowing and understanding of the world (2007: 14). Before each session, the teaching participants are briefed on the structure of the activity and arrive in full knowledge of the material that the class must study beforehand, as well as of the plot that both teachers are to progressively unfold before the cohort. On many occasions, however, it is necessary to adapt to the dynamics of the moment and improvise while still guiding the class toward the pedagogical objective.

Once they have heard the opposed parties speak on behalf of their ‘side’, the class divides into teams who each embrace a given conflicting position; the end of the exercise is for the groups to explore the possibility of producing a consensual text, while abiding to their respective perspective.

The sessions give students a sense of ownership of their intellectual progress, as they develop and practice activities that make them interact with each other, build on their peers’ contribution and conversation. They realise that they were actively shaping the process of their own learning, and having real fun doing it. Some of the effects of this particular T&L approach can be viewed in Pedagogy in ACTS at UQ’s Social Science Library- JZ1238.A8 P43 2009) two extracts of which follow below:

First D. A Palestinian student “I’ve been brought up to despise Israel and everything they’ve ever done. But then, for the Israel-Iran case study, my country was Israel, and putting yourself in Israel’s shoes, now I can understand why they do the things they do, and if I was the leader of Israel, I wouldn’t do things much differently. I think it gives you a really good perspective on why countries’ foreign policies are the way they are... The way I think about Israel has really changed from this course [sic]”.

Also L “Something I have liked... is how your perspective can change, it’s like, you can read the textbook and come to the lecture and come with what you think your take will be on the case study, but then you do the quiz at the start and just listening to what everyone else has to say can, you know, really change your thoughts on it, and I think you can see that from when you revisit the quiz at the end and you ask us who has changed their answers and I just think how this can be really good, yeah, how you can be fully just set in a state on mind but then, by the end of the hour and a half, it’s just a totally different view [sic].”
CREATING EXCELLENCE IN THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Scaffolding for Teaching Scholarship in Engineering

Supporting the integration, application and action of new teaching initiatives

Tom Baldock and Julie McCredden
School of Civil Engineering

Engineering courses at UQ have been growing rapidly over the last decade, to the point that most classes at all levels have very large enrolments. Busy lecturers have been needing support in finding, adopting and trialling new teaching and learning directions that can help them to provide quality teaching programs to so many students attempting to grasp and to apply difficult concepts.

The UQ Teaching and Learning Strategic Grant funding has provided a person to address these ‘enabling’ needs. The project is aimed at benchmarking the current situation for students, while at the same time, introducing new technologies and methods to assist teaching and learning within the school. The project has been running for 1 year so far. Some of the current developments and findings are:

**Student perceptions:** The project is investigating the perceptions of first to final year students regarding the context of their learning (lectures, tutorials, practicals, group work, online resources, peer assistance, tutors, learning spaces etc.), student approaches to learning, preferred learning styles, and student engagement across year levels. In 2009, these have been investigated using focus groups, interviews and surveys with students in first year and third year. This year Dr McCredden has also experienced what it is like to be a first year student by participating fully in the general first year applied mechanics courses, allowing her to interact with the students as peers, and to experience their learning processes and their struggles. The data that has been collected is beginning to shed light onto student needs and is giving insights into their patterns of learning. For example, students have reported how they have difficulty in making good use of online...
discussion boards because much of the content involves reasoning with diagrams; and third year students say that they get more help from their peers than from other sources. Findings such as these will assist the schools of Engineering within EAIT to address issues such as student engagement and the retention of first years. It will also inform decisions regarding curriculum, methods of teaching, and allocation of spaces and resources into the future.

Adopting new technologies

Lectopia Trials: Within the schools of Civil and Chemical Engineering, some lecturers have been supported in trials of Lectopia (i.e. lecture recordings, available on Blackboard). This blended learning tool allows students to fill in missed lectures and to revise lecture material at their own pace. While students have pleaded for Lectopia to be made available, some lecturers have been reluctant to use this technology, believing that it will diminish student attendance and therefore student learning.

In semester 1, 2009, Lectopia was trialed in two third year Engineering courses. Both the online student survey data and student marks have shown that Lectopia is a beneficial learning resource that contributes towards student learning. Lectopia is as useful and as appreciated by students in technical Engineering courses as it is in the more “chatty” university courses, where most of the previous published data has been collected. These results will be used to facilitate the uptake of Lectopia both at UQ and then further afield when it is presented at the Australian Association of Engineering Education conference at the end of this year.

Clicker trials: Clicker technology offers a potential avenue for lecturers to provide continuous feedback and to interact more with their students, even within large classes. This technology is currently being trialled within the School of civil engineering in two 3rd year courses: a high information content course and a more technical course.

To promote student engagement during lectures, the lecturers have redesigned their presentations to include multiple choice questions pertaining to content that has just been presented or that is about to be presented. The lecturers have been experimenting with different types of questions, such as questions that are diagram based or equation based, as well as questions that tap into students’ feelings, such as asking their opinions about road crash policies.

Data is currently being collected on whether students find the use of clickers to be effective, and whether clickers help to engage students in the content of the lectures. This data will be used to facilitate the uptake of clicker technology within Engineering at UQ, and will also add to the research that is exploring how to best engage students in technical courses. Clickers can help to provide continuous formative assessment as well as continuous feedback within a course. This aspect of clicker technology will be trialled in 2010.

Changing the culture: After 1 year, with the availability of a staff member focused on the ‘enabling of scholarship’, we have seen some serious attempts to move forward by some lecturing staff within Engineering. As these staff spread the word, more and more lecturers are beginning to see how technology and other teaching and learning advancements can assist them by saving time and by reducing their stress in trying to cater to large numbers of students while still keeping high standards in teaching. The project will continue into March 2010, building on these developments.
Cognitive linguistics and e-learning tools to facilitate language acquisition and performance in advanced Spanish students

Isolda Rojas-Lizana
School of Languages & Comparative Cultural Studies

My project aimed to facilitate second language acquisition and performance in advanced Spanish students using e-learning and Cognitive Linguistics tools. Spanish students used Blackboard tools to develop further their four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

Specifically they used Wimba voice, internet resources, and audio-visual material (e.g. youtube, educational websites, audio files) to answer guided worksheets and to interact among themselves in blended learning tasks. The development of elearning material has supported the effective use of on-line resources and has encouraged students to continue working in a virtual space outside the classroom environment, interacting virtually with their classmates.

However, the implementation of this project has taught me that we shouldn’t assume that all students are computer literate or that they have easy access to internet.

As for the use of cognitive linguistics tools, students were provided with cognitive explanations of complex Spanish grammatical and semantic concepts that do not have a direct equivalent in English.

Conceptual tools from the discipline of Cognitive Linguistics (specifically the concepts of categorisation, prototypes, background, foreground and perspective) were applied in these explanations.

In accordance with this approach, students were encouraged to use reflection and understanding rather than memorisation in their classroom learning and in their written work (worksheets ‘guías’) that were part of the course assessment, thus engaging in deep learning.

I have found for my own teaching that leading this project as a change agent has created for me greater assurances and confidence through critical reflection that can facilitate and direct innovative teaching and learning strategies that can provide immersive student learning environments.

I will continue to critically reflect and communicate strategic visioned teaching and learning strategies with my associates as well as new colleagues to address the ever present and changing learning needs that contemporary students demand.
Recently there has been strong impetus to encourage science students to develop the attributes of ‘being a scientist’ throughout their undergraduate years, particularly in their approach to science, through the development of skills such as critical thinking, information literacy and problem-solving skills, and an ability to use evidence. This has led to considerable changes in our approach to teaching science students, and as part of the curriculum renewal process in the BSc, we have tried to encourage this skill development through the introduction of activities like undergraduate research experiences and a move towards inquiry-based classes. It has been an exciting time to be involved in the implementation of the new curriculum, and it has given me some great opportunities to explore a number of aspects of science education.

One of these aspects is the assessment of ‘scientific’ skills. While there has been considerable research and enthusiasm around methods to introduce and promote scientific skill development, developing effective and equitable assessment practices to evaluate the progressive development of these skills remains quite a difficult task, and it is often exacerbated by large class sizes. My aim is to develop sustainable and effective methods to explicitly assess scientific and research skills. Hopefully this will improve student engagement by demonstrating the value that we place on these skills and that in turn will increase graduate skill levels.

Another more specific area of interest to me is the development of information literacy skills.

These days students are presented with an abundance of diverse information sources, increasingly unfiltered in nature. Such diversity makes understanding, evaluating and using the material in an ethical and legal manner increasingly challenging for them. I believe that information literacy skills are the foundation on which both independent scholarly learning and lifelong learning are built.

In 2008 I was involved in a project to promote the development of information literacy skills in 1st year BSc students, with the aim of increasing students’ ability to access, comprehend, and evaluate the information appropriate to their undergraduate courses. We believed that by improving these skills the students’ problem solving, analytical, and written communication skills would also improve, and it would help reduce incidences of plagiarism.

Both of these areas of interest have led to my involvement in a number of projects centred on scientific writing and communication, including the development of scientific reasoning, information literacy and the avoidance of plagiarism.

I have been fortunate to be employed in the School of Biomedical Sciences, as a school we have a number of teaching-focused staff and many other staff who are passionate about T&L. We have developed a collaborative group called the Education Research Unit (ERU), which has been a brilliant support network, has provided some great collaborations and a sounding board for projects, but mostly has meant I have had some excellent colleagues to work with, whose support and friendship I greatly value.
Interactive lecturing and action learning in physiology

Hardy Ernst, School of Biomedical Sciences

Students demand more personal investment of ‘ownership’ in their own learning. However, what I have found is that there is needed consideration on how to facilitate this ‘ownership’ in traditional structured learning environments such as lecture theaters and tutorial classrooms.

Learning is an active process, and as such interactive lectures are considered to be best educational practice. Consequently I set about developing active learning activities for the physiology content of my large-class physiology lectures in order to capture student learning engagement.

Significantly improved learning outcomes in particular from students with diverse science backgrounds reinforce the importance of keeping students engaged, and of providing students with opportunities in the classroom to think about and discuss their understanding of a newly introduced concept.

Students enjoy owning a role within lectures, so it was important for me to find strategies that facilitated this process whilst being aware that this facilitation requires a steering and guidance. Even years later alumni fondly remember these lectures as fun, fulfilling but exhausting learning environments.

At the same time alumni are surprised how relevant the lectures really were, how genuinely they understand physiology and how easily they are able to apply their knowledge to new clinical situations.

These experiences have reinforced in me and complimented my existing views on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning thus I am interested in promoting discipline-based Scholarship of Teaching and Learning within my School; I am co-chairing the ERU (http://www.uq.edu.au/sbms/education-research-unit), a school-based collaborate network of staff with an interest in Scholarship of Teaching, and I was instrumental in creating the recently launched new ERU Teaching and Learning Grants Scheme.

This scheme will provide modest seed funding for discipline-based Scholarship of Teaching and Learning projects within the School that have the potential to develop into larger teaching and learning grant applications and/or peer-reviewed publications.

The scheme particularly aims to enhance the scholarly activity of staff that are not eligible to apply for other UQ grant schemes based on their employment conditions such as Lecturer As on yearly contracts and general staff.

I will continue to seek new teaching approaches and methods that align with and lead interactive teaching and learning spaces in order to address contemporary student engagement.
Inter Professional Education (IPE) in neuro-rehabilitation

Louise Gustafsson,
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Inter-professional Education (IPE) is an important component of health programs at UQ and previously, students within the early years of programs in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) were not effectively exposed to the interprofessional team working in neurological rehabilitation.

Students needed a more in-depth understanding of not only the roles of each professional group but how the inter-professional team worked together. Importantly, we identified that the students needed a practice perspective that they could engage with while learning about and interacting with other professional groups.

This project has involved staff from all divisions within SHRS and has developed two IPE Packages for neuro-rehabilitation, a paediatric case and an adult case. It was important that the packages were easily accessible for all teaching or learning styles and each package has been designed to be incorporated into inter-professional workshops, discipline specific lectures or as web based learning tools.

Each package includes video footage of the client with the interprofessional team, supporting documents and reports, and directed questioning.

Students will be guided through the perspectives of different health professionals and be able to create the inter-professional team perspective. An exciting addition to this project has been the development of a facilitator training package that can be used to prepare tutors to work with students in inter-professional workshops.

This project is in the final stages of development and changes to IPE beliefs and knowledge will be evaluated with the introduction in 2010.

This has been a fantastic project work on and I have found that others within the school and faculty are keen to develop similar routes or areas of change.

I believe it is really important that we liaise and link with all stakeholders for the sake of improving and raising student learning and understanding of IPE.
Obstructive Structured Clinical Assessments (OSCA) has been used as a part of assessing clinical competence for many years. In the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Queensland (UQ), it has been used as part of assessing second year undergraduate nursing students since the school’s inception.

However, given the paucity of nursing research in the area, the continued use of the OSCA as a means of assessing clinical competence warrants further scrutiny. A project commenced in 2009 which explored the issues identified during an evaluation of the assessment of clinical competence through OSCA at UQ over five years and proposes strategies to deal with two of those issues.

A review of the OSCA processes used at UQ since 2004 found that ad hoc responses to issues in one year often created unanticipated difficulties in the following year. A project therefore commenced in 2009 to create a process that would overcome the major problems without compromising the reliability or validity of the assessment in future. As a first phase of remodelling the OSCA to address concerns about its resource intensive nature and to ensure that assessment by multiple examiners remained fair and equitable, video technology was introduced to support moderation, and is in the process of being evaluated.

Pre-moderation for the OSCA involved preparation of the lecturers through a meeting to discuss criteria and assessments and viewing of a video of a student performing the assessments for moderation. During this pre-moderation meeting, concerns regarding the level of difficulty of one of the assessment items were raised and subsequently another assessment item was incorporated into the OSCA to ensure equity. Evaluation of the success of this approach is ongoing.

Student preparation involved the course coordinator providing a lecture for the students to outline the assessment process and address any queries raised. The students were also made aware that the assessment would be video-taped for moderation purposes. The students had a revision session incorporated into the course in week 12 at the students’ clinical school site and three extra revision sessions were offered at a central location (UQ) where students could nominate a time to attend to practice the hands-on aspect of the OSCA under the supervision of a clinical lecturer.

While the use of video technology is not expected to address all of the issues, its capacity to reduce human resource demands and to enable moderation of results will be evaluated, as part of an ongoing program to enhance the validity and reliability of assessment of clinical competence.
The UQ Library plays a key role in supporting learning and discovery.

Rethinking information literacy

Pam Schindler, Tanya Zeibell with Keith Webster, UQ Library

The Library supports research by providing access to scholarly information resources and by fostering the knowledge and skills required to discover and use these resources effectively. The Library is rethinking its delivery of ‘information skills’ training to emphasise information literacy, the emphasis being on competency rather than simply skills development.

The Library’s objective is to enhance the student experience by delivering training that best meets a student’s needs and to enrich student learning by developing a student’s information ‘competence’.

This year the Library developed a tool that research higher degree students can use to audit their existing knowledge and skills. RHD students can work through the Research Higher Degree Candidate Information Skills Audit and then contact their liaison librarian for assistance with developing skills where necessary. Looking ahead, the remainder of this year will be devoted to the development of podcasts of information literacy materials, allowing students to work through material at their own pace, wherever and whenever they wish.

Established in 2006, The University of Queensland Library Excellence Award is presented annually to up to three UQ undergraduate students who demonstrate excellence in the use of the Library to enhance their studies. A cash prize of $1000 is awarded to each winner. The award was established to encourage the use of Library resources, enhance the development of library research techniques, and acknowledge the excellent work produced by UQ undergraduate students. It is an acknowledgment of how Library resources support teaching and learning.

Students are required to submit a 500-700 word reflective essay demonstrating how Library resources were used to produce an excellent assessment outcome. Essays are assessed against the following criteria: sophistication, originality, the depth or breadth in the use of Library collections, evidence of significant personal learning and the development of a habit of research and inquiry, and an exceptional ability to locate, select, evaluate and synthesise Library resources.
The Professional Engineering Placement Scholarship program (PEPS) is a work-based program that gives final year chemical, mechanical or electrical engineering students the opportunity to spend up to six months in industry while still gaining academic credit. Thus students get the chance to have high quality industrial experience without extending their degree.

Students selected for PEPS are placed in industry during the summer for vacation work, and then during the first semester of their final year, they complete a project proposed by the placement organisation. During this time students are enrolled at UQ but spend 100% of their time off campus.

Placement organisations pay a fee to participate in PEPS and students receive a tax-free scholarship. Students gain academic credit for the placement semester by completing two university courses; a Research Project, and a Professional Development course.

Students must also submit a copy of the piece of assessment that includes a bibliography showing the resources used, and a statement supporting their application from their supervising lecturer.

This year twenty submissions were received and will be judged by the University Librarian and Director of Learning Services in consultation with the President or the Academic Board and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Winners will be announced during Teaching and Learning Week.

Learning spaces

The Library provides a high-quality environment on campus that incorporates learning spaces, research infrastructure, and technology to support independent learning and peer interaction. In 2008 the Library conducted research into student information seeking behaviour and use of library learning spaces, to ascertain the effectiveness of library design in meeting student needs. The results have influenced the planning of new library spaces. In 2010 the Library will open a new branch in the Pharmacy Australia Centre of Excellence.

UQ pharmacy students will benefit from the provision of Library services and access to high quality information in a first-class learning environment. Like other ‘next generation’ learning spaces, the new branch will cater for diverse learning experiences and will provide another tangible display of how the UQ Library is enhancing student learning.
CREATING EXCELLENCE IN THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Research Project can be either a major investigation, or a research project, or a significant design task that integrates technical, commercial and other factors including risk and project management. The quality of the project theses is generally very high. Students are usually getting involved in process or design problems at a higher level than their peers on campus, and often the work is critical to the company business.

The Professional Development course is a unique feature of the course that uses critical reflective thinking to allow students to progress their professional development. In 2009, the Graduate Careers Services were involved for the first time in the preparation workshop.

Their input involved running a session on job applications, which is an assessed item of the program. They were later involved in the assessment process and their feedback delivered to students.

This helped to make the learning experiences more relevant to students, helped them recognise their employability skills, and enabled them to see how they could best use their experiences to gain graduate employment.

Last year the programme was successfully extended by creating an equivalent PIPS program for information technology students.

This program is modelled on the PEPS program and allows final year information technology students to undertake industry placements.

The placements have been varied, and have included local, interstate and international locations. In 2007, two students undertook an international placement with New Britain Palm Oil Limited in West Britain, PNG. This has proved to be a very successful partnership and students have been placed there each year since.

Students have also been placed with Qatar Petroleum in Qatar and Kraft Foods in Germany. One success of the program is the ongoing links forged with companies such as Queensland Alumina who have supported the program for several years.

Many students secure graduate positions with their placement companies.

The PEPS website (www.uq.edu.au/peps) keeps students in touch with latest vacancies, allowing them to register their interest and apply online. It also provides employers with access to information about the program. The website launch was complemented by marketing materials aimed at employers and students.
First Year Occupational Therapy Students get into Screech!

Monica Moran, Occupational Therapy

What is Screech?

Screech Theatre is a project for, by and about young people. It brings together young people with and without disabilities to learn through theatre. Screech Theatre is a project of the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland [www.cplqld.org.au](http://www.cplqld.org.au)

The project is facilitated by Alexandra McCallum, a writer, storyteller and youth arts worker who works with young people in schools and community centres around Queensland.

For the third year in a row students from UQ have collaborated with Alex and Screech. Occupational therapy students enrolled in OCTY1201 a 1st year therapeutic communication course (coordinated by Monica Moran) worked with Screech over semester 2 to assist Alexandra and the young people to create a unique creative theatrical experience that culminated in a highly successful public performance. The learning objective for this activity is to expose OT students to the lived experience of a person with a disability and allow them to gain practical experience in communicating with people who use augmented and assistive communication techniques.

Alex said of this year’s OT students...

They were incredibly helpful. Our process involves so much input directly from young people - unlike the average school musical - and is very labour intensive so extra participation assistance is vital. We get a lot of feedback from our participants that they often feel sidelined in group processes at school so giving them creative control over the show is very important for their confidence and development. It also encourages them to learn to take more responsibility for themselves and to understand how to do this even if they need some help to carry out their ideas.

The 1st OT students had many reflections on their learning from this experience...

It was fascinating to hear the stories of the young people about school, home, friends and parties – each viewing life in different ways. And I realised that creating an environment where these teenagers can have the opportunity to engage in occupations such as writing, acting, imagining and creating in a safe and supportive environment really is important in creating meaning in their lives.

In the context of real life experience, communication is usually something I do not struggle with. However, when someone else’s real life experience collides with mine in ways I have not encountered before, expanding one’s communication strategies becomes vital and, as with any new experience, some strategies are successful, and some are not.

My role as a volunteer with Screech Theatre and working with young people with a disability has been an enormous wonderful journey of learning and experi-
ence. I feel that I have gained a new way to communicate with people that I have never in the past tried before. I have also taken home a new perspective on socialising and communicating. It is actually quite empowering for oneself, especially if you are not already a good communicator. At first I was really hesitant, shy and felt a little vulnerable around new people. It actually took me a few weeks to ‘get in the zone’ and really take control of things. Once we started reading the script and playing games, we were all so enthusiastic and forgot everything else.

When I first met these young people I was really surprised by what I saw. I did not expect to see just how complicated the living experience for these young people really was. It was actually a guess, predict and discover process for me and I was constantly finding myself thinking and wondering about just how difficult it is to live with a disability. I was so amazed at how strong minded the young people were in everything they did. For most of them their main mobility is on a wheelchair and it is hard to believe they can still accomplish their preferred occupations and tasks.

Front Row (Left to Right): Phoebe Roche, Michelle Lindley. Back Row (Left to Right): Charne Laybourne, Adrian Van Der Zalm, Danielle Stuart, Dale Gonelli, Sandy Porter.
Tales from the South Pacific: Internationalisation, work integrated learning and study abroad

Mark Hayes
School of Journalism & Communication

Balmy evenings, beautiful beaches and small, friendly communities. Yes, there are worse places than the islands of the South Pacific in which to do journalism work experience.

Hayley Webb worked at Fiji TV, getting stories on-air in her own right, during a 14 day stint in December 2008.

Marie M’Balla-Ndi, an international postgraduate journalism student from France, is now a regular contributor - in French - to New Caledonia’s daily newspaper Les Nouvelles Caledoniennes.

New Caledonia is the nearest French-speaking territory to Australia, a two-hour jet flight from Brisbane, and has a strong Australian expatriate community.

Her most recent contributions have been about the dust storm, which headed towards Noumea after leaving Brisbane, an illustrated piece about the recent Riverfire Festival, and the activities of acclaimed Fijian media freedom fighter Netani Rika.

Marie has excellent contacts the Pacific having attended the Pacific International News Association (PINA) annual conference in Vanuatu in the 2009 inter-semester break, while doing a stint of work experience at the Vanuatu Daily Post. A third student, Jill Poulsen, is gearing up for a stint at The Daily Post in Vanuatu this month.

All three experiences have been organised by journalism lecturer, Dr Mark Hayes, himself a Pacific media veteran, who is well known in newsrooms across the South Pacific.

“Whenever there is a crisis in the region: a natural disaster, or political upheaval, Australian media organisations tend to “parachute” in reporters with minimal local knowledge and experience”, Dr Hayes said.

“Our program gives Pacific media people confidence that we are developing a cadre of journalists who do understand the region, who have their own contacts, and their own experience. I cannot think of a more effective way of assuring people in the Pacific that we understand their situation”, Dr Hayes said.

The School of Journalism & Communication also has a number of students from the Pacific, supported by AusAid, and their interests are taken seriously. Staff from the School regularly travel to the region, and recent visitors to the School from the region include human rights activist Akuika Yambaki, and Fiji Times editor Netani Rika.

"These initiatives were reported to government in a major analysis by the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies on the study of the Pacific in Australian Higher Education", Dr Hayes said.

"This is evidence that our internationalisation activities are receiving national attention."
Since 1993, Japanese language students have had the opportunity to practice authentic Japanese language in the Japanese free conversation class which has been conducted voluntary by Mrs. Kayoko Uchiyama at the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies. It has been a very popular class among UQ students who are studying Japanese, exchange students from Japan and overseas students from Japan. It is held once a week at lunch time in the informal atmosphere. Another Japanese conversation class is held once a week by WASABI (Japanese Society) during the semester.
Working in teams

Lydia Kavanagh (School of Chemical Engineering)

Teamwork is a key component of graduate attribute statements of most Australian and many international universities (ABET, 2007) and this attribute is essential in industry. Over the past 5 years we have been working to further develop and disseminate a successful teaching resource for Proactively Ensuring Team Success (The PETS process).

This process has applicability across the higher education sector, particularly in its contribution to:
(i) assisting students to achieve graduate outcomes associated with teamwork,
(ii) enhancing the student experience, and
(iii) improving student retention.

The PETS process can be summarised by a number of inter-related actions:

- purposeful group allocation based on a group skills inventory and/or prior knowledge of student attributes;
- student self-assessment of teamwork attributes;
- explicit student skill development in team dynamics using classroom learning, mentoring and assessment;
- tailored project features and assessment;
- individual and team structured reflection;
- anonymous peer evaluation and assessment of team members; and
- team mentoring and monitoring.

This combination of actions has been found to diminish social loafing and team dysfunction with the result that a measurable improvement can be achieved in both student satisfaction and performance. It is however not a ‘quick fix’ and requires a significant time commitment from instructors and mentors.

Extensive trials have indicated that the process is highly transferable across fields of study and across institutions.

This project began life as an action research project developed by Lydia as part of the requirements of a Graduate Certificate in Education (Higher Education) in 2004. Lydia had been using student project teams in second year Chemical Engineering courses since 2002, and was concerned to find ways of addressing the team dysfunction and social loafing that appeared to be an inevitable element of student project teams.

In late 2004 Lydia recruited Dr John Harrison (Journalism & Communication) to collaborate on implementing, evaluating, improving and disseminating the PETS process. Various sections of the PETS process were trialled by UQ academics, the approach was presented at conferences, and champions from national universities were enlisted.
In 2006, A/Prof David Neil (GPEM) approached the team with a proposal to develop an online training program that could form part of the PETS process; this was integrated into a successful ALTC proposal. Since this time, Dr John Cokley (Journalism & Communication) has joined the team and the project is all but complete.

The key deliverables from the ALTC project which is due to be completed in March/April 2010 are:

- software for instructors to automate peer assessment (Complete),
- an online student training system that will increase student expertise and engagement in team-building (Beta version being trialled), and
- a user manual to support dissemination of the package (Hard copy complete, Online copy being developed).

The Editorial team for this ezine:

**Neville Smith** is the TEDI Project Officer for Creating Excellence in Scholarship of Teaching & Learning/PEI Project at The University of Queensland and a research higher degree student in the School of Education.

**Dr John Harrison** is a Lecturer in the School of Journalism & Communication at The University of Queensland and a specialist in strategic communication.

**Dr Mia O’Brien** is Lecturer (Higher Education Pedagogy & Scholarship), Teaching & Educational Development Institute and Convenor: UQ T&L Network/CESoTL Initiative at The University of Queensland.

**Dr David Geelan** is Senior Lecturer in Science Education, School of Education at The University of Queensland.
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One of the key ways in which to engage colleagues in their development as critical and reflective teachers, in a way that goes beyond the hints and tips they may need at the beginning of their teaching careers, is ... to stimulate their intellectual curiosity.

The asking of questions is at the heart of intellectual curiosity and engaging staff in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)...

Breslow, Healey et al., 2004

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is a practice that involves everyone interested in the enhancement of teaching and learning at the University of Queensland. This includes teaching and research staff, teaching focused staff, and professional staff, who together comprise a lively community of collaborative research and practice.

We hope you enjoy this inaugural edition of the Creating Excellence in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CESoTL) ezine.

If you have a story to tell, contact Neville Smith. nsmith4@uq.edu.au
The deadline for the next issue is JUNE 12, 2010.