



Towards a new professional learning framework

Transforming the learning experience
by promoting and supporting
outstanding teaching

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Executive summary

There is an urgent need to transform the student learning experience at the University. Equipping teaching staff to bring about these changes involves professional development to change teaching approaches, including wider and more innovative uses of learning technologies. A new professional learning framework is proposed, *flipping* and *personalising* professional development to ensure that each educator is provided with opportunities to continually and actively improve their practice. A new suite of online courses on teaching approaches, techniques and effective use of learning technologies and spaces will be developed. Through self assessment and an online testing environment, educators will be able to determine their mastery of the approaches. From this, they can then innovate in their courses or extend their expertise through bespoke face-to-face workshops developed with the faculties, utilising local champions.

This matrix of courses and workshops with self and peer assessment will provide a suite for individuals to choose from according to identified needs and goals. The standalone opportunities, together with others such as peer observation and disciplinary workshops, can then be combined to provide a customised framework for continual development.

Possible ways to provide recognition and rewards for pursuing professional development include mapping to the AP&D process, articulation with formal courses such as the Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Higher Education) and alignment with external national and internal frameworks.

Discussion and feedback on the proposed framework is invited.

The need for a new professional learning framework

Background and purpose

The University's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan commits the University to a distinctive and outstanding learning experience. This outcome will be achieved through two key strategies: a transformation of undergraduate education and a transformation of the student learning experience. The new curriculum framework, and the graduate qualities and educational approaches embedded within it, require new styles and methods of teaching. The strategy seeks also to build on this by developing our capacity for more interactive and collaborative learning designs.

Developing a culture that values teaching is a responsibility of every part of the University. This includes a readiness to engage in professional development and to be creative and innovative in developing teaching approaches. Advances in technology have not changed pedagogical approaches, but they are allowing educators to facilitate interaction and collaborative learning in classes of all sizes and types. Technology has changed the ways in which content is delivered, potentially allowing us to concentrate our teaching on developing deeper and more experiential learning. It also enables us to understand student engagement and success more rapidly, and to implement personalised learning interventions and support when and where it is needed. The rapid and ongoing changes in technology highlight the need for continual refreshment and innovation in our teaching approaches.

Technology already pervades almost all aspects of student learning, including student-student and staff-student interactions. The use of the LMS for all units of study, for example, means that educators' knowledge of it should now be at a level of maturity that focus can turn to using it in more engaging and interesting ways. Currently, most LMS sites only deliver content.

Student satisfaction surveys at the University consistently reflect declining relative performance, reinforcing the need to improve students' learning experiences and the shared responsibility of all staff in doing so. This document outlines a new professional learning framework designed to promote, support and encourage outstanding teaching and continual professional refreshment. It is designed to be responsive to the needs and goals of individual faculties, schools and educators and to be sustainable and flexible by fitting within the realities of academic work and workloads. The framework outlined here, once developed, will itself need to be readily expandable and open to ongoing change. In particular, it is designed to articulate with formal professional qualifications including, potentially, external national and international frameworks.

Educational Innovation team: 'hub and spoke' model

The Educational Innovation (EI) team in the DVC (Education) Portfolio was recently formed to bring together the expertise in the Institute of Teaching and Learning (ITL) and Sydney eLearning. The formation of a single team reflects a desire to more closely and consistently support the needs of faculties, as well as the increasingly important task of integrating the most effective parts of online, face-to-face and blended learning.

This 'hub and spoke' structure will enable more faculty-specific professional learning requirements to be realised, with the support of educational designers, academic developers and local champions, and for exemplars and innovations to be widely shared across the whole institution. The model outlined here is designed to be responsive and personalised, reflecting the widely different starting points and needs of each individual, along with a desire to ensure that each person has the opportunity to continually develop as an educator.

Current professional learning opportunities

Alongside formal and informal courses, seminars and workshops run by faculties and disciplines, the Education Portfolio currently offers a number of resources, courses and formal qualifications:

- **'Principles and Practice of University Teaching' (P & P):** a two day face-to-face course primarily for academics new to the University that combines with a faculty-based component. The course is used for confirmation and consists of workshops on basic aspects of teaching, including use of the LMS, engaging students and writing authentic assessments. It is available 3 times a year with overall attendance of ~150 each year.
- **'Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Higher Education)':** a post-graduate award course comprising 4 units of study, requiring attendance for 1 day per week for 2 semesters (plus assessments). This course is available to teaching staff who have permanent residency/citizenship status. It aims to encourage scholarly, research-led approaches to teaching and critical reflection. Participants begin in March with overall total enrolment of ~30 each year.
- **'Masters of Education':** the Graduate Certificate can be extended by participants taking a further 4 units of study. Full course fees are charged to participants and enrolment is typically low.
- **Blended learning programs such as 'Foundations of Research Supervision':** a course required for new supervisors comprising online modules and a final face-to-face forum.
- **Standalone blended learning programs:** these include courses for sessional staff and cultural competence.
- **eLearning workshops:** a variety of fundamental, extension and faculty-specific workshops in using the enterprise eLearning tools, including basic use of the LMS and Turnitin.
- **Seminars:** lectures and workshops such as the edTech series, from inspiring internal and external champions, including those who have received educational innovation grants, VC and national award winners.
- **Standalone resources:** information sheets, teaching insights and videos.'

Given the challenges described above, this is an opportune moment to examine our professional learning framework and its contribution to the development of a culture where teaching, professional development and an openness to innovate are valued and supported. To encourage or even perhaps require staff to continually engage with professional development opportunities, these clearly need to be fit for purpose: they need to be effective, relevant to disciplinary and individual contexts and flexible - including being available in convenient formats, places and times. Given the relatively small reach of the Graduate Certificate, the uneven level of attendance at the eLearning workshops and the relative decline in student satisfaction, it appears that the current model is not achieving these aims.

Staff satisfaction with the LMS also needs to be improved. At the moment, as an institution, we tend to use only a small set of its in-built tools and do not exploit the potential to add tools to it. Better showcasing of these functionalities and the imaginative ways in which staff are using them also needs to be built into the framework.

Personalised professional learning

Flipping professional development

Every educator and every discipline requires something different from a professional development program. Each individual is at a different point in their career with different experiences of and attitudes to technology, from early adopters to the tech-adverse. Standardised, 'one size fits all' approaches, such as workshops, can be disengaging: the tendency can be to proceed at a speed that suits no-one. In a professional learning framework, it is therefore important to provide personalization: the flexible use of different delivery modes and provision of a suite of options.

Every educator in the institution needs to progress and develop from where they are. The forward movement needs to be ongoing and continuous, improving practice iteratively: for many, the use of technology is best developed gradually rather than expecting sudden shifts in approach. To ensure relevance to disciplinary context, professional development needs to be a collaboration involving local champions.

The options outlined below could be completed as stand-alone activities, or combined as flexible packages over several semesters. As described in the 'Recognising professional learning' section of this document, they could also be combined for formal recognition.

Online courses on 'how to' use each tool

For many, a face-to-face workshop covering how to use a tool is not the best approach. In our personal lives, we tend to expect to get to grips with a new software application using the manual, videos and trial-and-error.

Enterprise tools

For centrally supported tools, the following will therefore be provided:

1. An introduction to what the tool does and tasks/problems it could assist with.
2. Videos, instructions and tip sheets explaining the mechanics of using the tool. These would include vendor materials as well as internally produced guides.
3. Internally produced material to set use of the tool in the local context. This might include links to specific policies if relevant.
4. Suggestions for possible teaching approaches and techniques for exploiting the tool.
5. Exemplars from academics generated, for example, through educational innovation grants.
6. Self-assessment activities to indicate mastery.
7. Certification of mastery if required for formal recognition (see below).

Non-enterprise tools

For third-party tools added to the LMS or developed at a local level, similar resources would be produced by the local champions and made available.

Online courses on teaching approaches, techniques and use of learning spaces

Analogous courses will be provided that will support staff in shifting their teaching approach. Given the range of experience in the participants, these would be offered at different levels – for example, 'flipping your class' could be tuned to suit staff at different stages. Each course would contain the following elements:

1. An introduction to the approach and tasks/problems it could assist with.
2. Videos, instructions and tip sheets explaining the approach and how to implement and evaluate its impact.
3. Internally produced material to set use of the approach or technique in the local context.

4. Suggestions for possible tools to assist in delivering the approach.
5. Exemplars from academics generated, for example, through educational innovation grants.
6. Self-assessment activities to indicate mastery.
7. Certification of mastery if required for formal recognition (see below).

For many staff, these online resources may be all that is needed to begin innovating in their classes. Others may wish to extend their understanding of the pedagogical potential and use more advanced features.

Focussed extension workshops

With the expectation that participants have already mastered basic use of a tool or an approach, face-to-face workshops would be designed and tuned to local needs. Customisation will be assisted, if required, using the EI spoke and local leadership. The structure of these workshops will follow some general principles:

1. Location in faculty spaces with an expectation to 'bring your own device'. With the tool already tested through the online pre-workshop activity, it is important that the participant continues to work on their own set up.
2. Expectation that participants will bring partly developed resources, such as Turnitin rubrics, Blackboard quizzes or Kaltura videos.
3. Involvement of local champions and others actively using the tool.
4. Workshop time will be devoted to collaborative and open sharing of ideas with tangible outcomes, such as improved rubrics, quizzes and interactive videos.
5. Attendance at these workshops and completion of activities within them could be recorded to contribute to the certification of mastery if required for formal recognition (see below).

Matrix of stand-alone opportunities

The stand-alone courses on tools and techniques outlined above are of course linked activities. As illustrated in table 1 below, a staff member pursuing an interest in developing a teaching technique will need to master one or more tools. Similarly, a staff member who wants to learn how to use a specific tool will be able to use this technical expertise in the development of their pedagogical approach. Over time, a staff member could therefore choose from the suite to build rounded expertise. This provides a time efficient and natural way to build a practical portfolio and, as discussed in the 'Recognising professional learning' section, to perhaps obtain formal accreditation or recognition.

Table 1: Possible partial suite and matrix of professional learning opportunities

Course	Authentic assessment	Academic integrity	Flipping your class	Personalising learning support
Introduction to Turnitin	x	x		
Using rubrics	x	x		
Kaltura Videos			x	x
Grade Centre		x	x	x

Staff may wish to choose individual courses of the types described above or to combine them depending on their role. Table 2 below illustrates how the suite could be promoted and organised according to an individual's responsibilities.

Table 2: Possible partial suite learning opportunities organised by role requirements

I want to learn more about	How do I complete the course?	I need resources to help me undertake my responsibilities as:
Blackboard basics	Face-to-face	New to the institution
Marking online with a rubric	Online	Tutor/demonstrator
Flipping (basics)	Online	Lecturer
Flipping (advanced)	Blended	Lecturer
Academic integrity	Blended	Unit coordinator

Delivery of online courses

Authentic delivery of professional development is key to both its sustainability and effectiveness. Courses on using LMS tools, delivered through a be-spoke application or courses on laboratory-based inquiry learning delivered in sanitised, purpose-built venues are less likely to encourage participants to change their practice than ones delivered in real environments. It is for this reason that the workshops described above will encourage participants to work on their own devices and with their own teaching materials. Similarly, online courses will be delivered on the relevant platform. For the most part, this will therefore be the Enterprise LMS.

Most of the online coursework components will be housed in a single LMS site (an eCommunity). All academic staff will be enrolled in this site, ideally as soon as they join the institution. The matrix of opportunities will naturally be baked into the design through links.

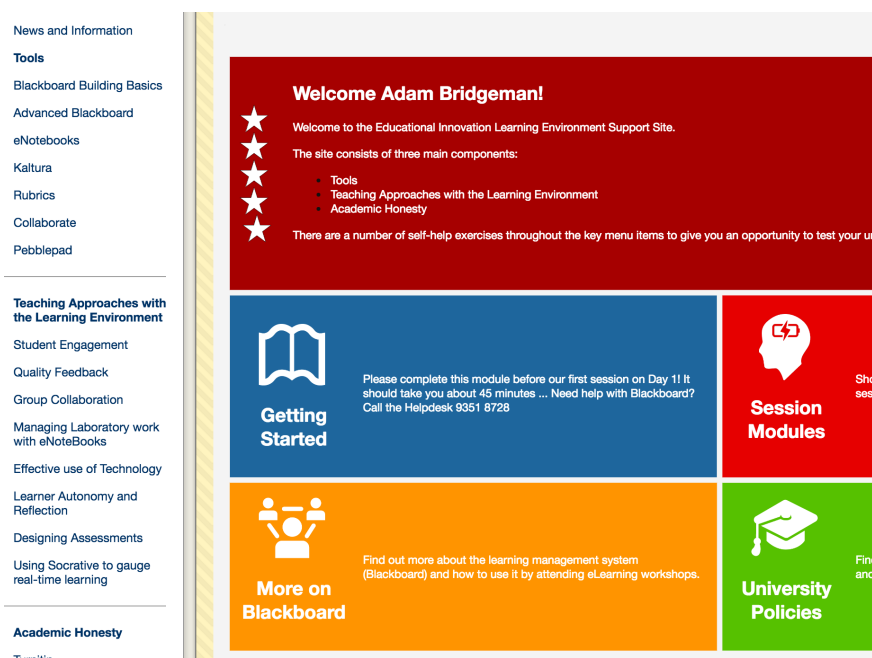


Figure 1: Professional learning website in the LMS showing possible menu structure

The tools in the LMS will be used to personalise the experience by, for example, selective release of (i) resources when a course component is finished, (ii) certificates after courses are completed and (iii) recommendations for further learning based on patterns of course choices.

As noted above, participants will be able to self assess their mastery of a topic through completion of simple diagnostic and comprehension tests. However, to properly assess understanding of deploying and using a tool, participants need to build an activity which incorporates it. An individual testing environment/sandpit ('playground' in Blackboard) will be built for academic staff to do this. The participant can then self-test the site in 'student view'. For full certification, the participant would add a peer or peers to their playground who would work through the activity as a student and leave feedback.

For example, a participant might set up a Turnitin assignment with a specific end date. The colleague would then submit a dummy assignment and ensure that all components work as intended.

Faculty and external professional learning

The courses outlined above cover only those that would be actively supported through the EI team. Many professional learning opportunities are also provided locally in departments, schools and faculties and through national and international disciplinary networks, conferences etc.

Role of peer observation

One of easiest and most effective ways to improve teaching and share best practice is to observe other people teaching. Alongside watching the 'tricks' used by good educators and seeing how students' engagement varies over a class period, peer observation allows an educator to see exactly how innovative approaches work in practice and increases the chances for fruitful discussions among peers.

Alongside the development of the professional learning framework described in this document, proposals for a structure for peer observation of face-to-face and online teaching will be developed. A number of faculties already have effective peer observation and review of teaching initiatives, commonly running as the faculty part of the P&P program. An easy approach is simply to adopt an 'open-door' principle in which skilled, experienced and effective educators agree to be observed without any formalities. A similar approach can be used for online teaching by asking coordinators to add additional staff as 'students' or 'auditors' in their LMS sites.

Sessional and professional staff

The framework outlined in this document is designed primarily for academic staff. Many of the activities described, however, are suitable for sessional staff and for professional staff with student-facing roles. Further work is underway to develop additional opportunities for these staff, and ways for their involvement to be recognised.

Evaluation and effect on student learning

The new professional learning framework outlined in this document is designed to promote, support and encourage outstanding teaching and continual professional refreshment. There are a number of measures that could be used to evaluate its success. Staff engagement, progress and satisfaction with each course will be measured, along with the extent to which tools and approaches are adopted. The main objective of the framework is to continually enhance teaching quality, student engagement and learning outcomes. The key indicators are therefore the extent to which outcomes improve, including student and peer satisfaction, particularly for items related to teaching quality and innovation.

Recognising professional learning

Possible ways to recognise and encourage participation

If desired or required by a participant, completion of courses will be recorded using low stakes self-assessment quizzes and peer marked exercises online or at workshops. This enables a range of ways for engagement in professional learning to be informally or even formally recognized. Strategies for consideration are discussed below.

Mapping to AP&D

It is hoped that the provision of a map of professional learning opportunities will inform and assist quality conversations about university teaching informally through mentors and formally through the AP&D process. Suggestions for courses to be completed or for peer review activities could be fed directly into the AP&D system as identified through student evaluation or other measures. Engagement and completion of professional learning courses could similarly, if desired, be fed into this system.

The framework could provide tools and resources to ensure effective and continual professional learning becomes a strong focus in the AP&D process. To actively encourage and reward participation, it could also potentially transition to a points system for an advisor to construct a plan of required development and support.

Relationship to the Graduate Certificate

The current Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Higher Education) offers 5 units of study of which 4 need to be completed, typically in one year. The first semester contains 2 compulsory units. In the second semester, participants complete 2 of the 3 units on offer. As noted above, the course requires, roughly, attendance on 1 afternoon per week in each semester and completion of a number of assessments.

The standalone courses could articulate into these units, so that someone enrolling in the Graduate Certificate could complete them as part of the learning activities of the unit. Similarly, someone who has already completed them would be given credit for those parts of the course. In both cases, the unit would be completed through assessment of a more rigorous task.

In this way, an educator would complete parts of the Graduate Certificate gradually and over a longer time period. This would enable participants to gain more experience and opportunities to reflect and innovate in their teaching. It would also enable study patterns for the formal qualification that are compatible with the cycle of academic work.

Relationship to external frameworks

The UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship scheme is becoming the norm in external recognition for teaching development. The scheme awards four levels of Fellowship: Associate Fellows, Fellows, Senior Fellows, Principal Fellows for university educators who can demonstrate evidence of learning against three dimensions:

1. Areas of activity (5 areas)
2. Core Knowledge (6 areas)
3. Professional values (4 areas)

Each level of Fellowship requires evidence of learning at a different standard, with increases in sophistication both quality and quantity. In the UK, at least, the number and percentage of

academic staff at the different levels is becoming an important indicator of institutional teaching quality. There is also an increasing expectation of a level of fellowship for new appointments. ANU recently adopted the framework and can now self accredit its staff. Possible options for Sydney include:

1. Map our framework onto that of the HEA Fellowship with recommendations about what needs to be completed and demonstrated for different fellowship levels.
2. Additionally applying to have our Graduate Certificate recognised at a particular level of HEA Fellowship. This would entail using the HEA dimensions to re-think the curriculum.