Preparing Academics to Teach in Higher Education (PATHE)

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Purpose of project

- The first phase of this project is scoping different approaches to the induction of academic staff as they commence their teaching practice in Australian higher education.
Induction programs provide an opportunity for institutional change in teaching and learning by:

- developing and enhancing the knowledge base of university teachers (Fraser 2005);
- drawing academics into existing communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) which focus on learning and teaching both within and across disciplines, or encouraging these staff to form a community of practice themselves;
- contributing to scholarship in the field of higher education by helping to define the work of Induction programs. These programs are part of the new and emerging field of scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education that has its own field of scholarship and enquiry, drawn from diverse disciplines such as politics, management, sociology, philosophy and education (Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003);
- Influencing individual and institutional practice which contributes to the improvement of the student learning experience (Beaty 1998).
Problem

- Currently induction programs are of diverse and variable quality and there is no systematic sector wide approach to their development (Dearn, Ryan and Fraser, 2004).
The aims of the project are:

- To develop a framework that will support a scholarship of higher education teaching development.
- To generate evidence-based information that will underpin the generation of commonly understood expectations across the sector regarding the induction of new academics to their role as teachers.
- To produce a credible resource of successful practices and models that can be disseminated sector wide.
- To identify areas in which further development could be supported to change and improve existing practices.
Key Questions

- What are the different approaches to the preparation of academics as they commence their teaching practice in Australian and international higher education?
- How can the impact of these programs be evaluated?
- What are the conditions and models that best produce the desired impacts on student learning, teaching-learning scholarship, teaching as leadership and institutional practice?
- What are the best processes to support the dissemination of materials and practices across the sector and ensure the uptake and embedding of effective practice?
Key Questions continued

- What are the resources and ongoing professional development requirements of those who teach in these programs?
- What induction processes best meet the teaching needs of academics at the time of appointment?
- What should be included in national benchmarks for quality induction of academics to teaching and learning in Australian higher education?
The project design involves:

- processes for collaborating, developing and sharing best practice;
- development of theoretical frameworks to describe the teaching capabilities expected of staff new to teaching;
- investigation of emergent practices to inform induction programs;
- the development of common tools for evaluating the impact of Foundations programs on teaching quality;
The enhancement of Leadership Capacity through:

- a residential component providing leadership development opportunities for leaders of teams;
- opportunities to engage with national and international leaders in teaching and learning e.g. Carrick Fellows;
- opportunities for pursuing further grants and research
- the consolidation of formalised network
- the enhancement of sector-wide engagement in the scholarship of Foundation activities through:
  - formation of working teams on key areas
  - dissemination, further trialling and embedding of project outcomes;
  - strengthening cross-institutional and cross discipline networks between teachers of Foundations programs to avoid duplication.
Key areas of interest

- a framework and process that supports the dissemination of materials and practices across the sector to ensure the uptake and embedding of effective practice.
- a framework that will assist institutions in interpreting academics’ induction to teaching needs at the time of appointment
- a framework to support the emergence of national benchmarks for quality induction of academics to teaching and learning in Australian higher education
- the identification of the approaches, conditions and models that best produce the desired impacts on student learning, teaching-learning scholarship, teaching as leadership and institutional practice from an national and international search
Key areas of interest

- A map of the current state of programs used to induct and prepare academics to teach in higher education in Australia, such as foundations of university teaching and similar programs.
- A framework for the evaluation of the impact of these programs on:
  - Quality learning outcomes for students,
  - The development of a scholarship of higher education learning and teaching (SoLT),
  - New academics’ conceptualisation of teaching as learning focused and academic leadership,
  - Related institutional practice
- A framework for the identification and dissemination of exemplary models and approaches from national and international practice ensuring that academics acquire pedagogical and assessment literacy at the outset of their role as academic teachers.
- A identification process for resources and ongoing professional development required for those who teach in these programs.
Approach for Phase two

- Project outcomes will be achieved through a participatory approach. This project has two types of involvement: “Leaders” and “Sub-project Groups”. Each sub-project group will consist of four team members and a leader.
Sub-project groups will investigate:

- Impact
- Resources
- Benchmarking
- Models
- Professional Development
Do you think we have the ‘right’ areas for investigation?

- What other areas would you add?
- What is missing?
Design of the project.

- What are the risks you can see in the design of the project?
- What would be the problems you might encounter doing a similar project?
Outcomes

- What outcomes of the project would you be most interested in hearing about?