PATHE
Preparing Academics for teaching in Higher Education
Background

• Project began as an action from the Foundations Colloquium in Launceston in 2005
• 6 people were tasked with putting a proposal together for an ALTC grant (then Carrick)
• Grant was approved in March 2007 as a Discipline-based Initiative
PATHE overview

- The PATHE project will scope different approaches currently adopted for the preparation for university teaching program for academic staff as they commence their teaching practice in Australian higher education as well as reviewing best practice.
- The project builds on and is informed by existing concepts developed in previous Foundations Colloquia. The aims and design of the project are collaborative and inclusive. It has a residential component which provides opportunities for collaborative scholarship and dissemination of current and new practices.
Aims

• The project aims to devise a framework for preparation for university teaching programs that will benefit the sector by promoting a set of shared expectations and understandings about the nature of university learning and teaching, and locating these programs in that wider context.
Approach

• The project proposes a model of national collaboration using a distributed leadership approach.

• In order to identify, examine and promote those features that support effective outcomes, this proposal will make use of, and develop further, the collaborative structures operating through the Foundations Colloquium network.

• 5 sub-projects were identified for further research at the end of Stage One.
Grant details

• Steering group
  – Dr Margaret Hicks (UniSA) – host institution
  – Dr Heather Smigiel (Flinders University)
  – Dr Gail Wilson (Uni of Western Sydney now at Bond University)
  – Dr Allan Goody (UWA now private consultant)
  – Mia O’Brien (UQ)
  – Deanne Gannaway (Flinders University now UQ)

• Funding: $300,000
• Distributed leadership methodology
• Project – 4 stages
# Project Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Sept 2007 – March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survey of Foundations programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Sub- project teams working on 5 key areas:</td>
<td>April – December 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Impact</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Resources</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Professional development needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Models</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Benchmarking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Development of resources from sub-project teams Dissemination</td>
<td>January – November 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Initial national and international scoping</td>
<td>Identified current programs &amp; issues; sub-project topics &amp; application processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2: Sub-project research</td>
<td>Report on findings and outcomes of sub-projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sub-project resource generation</td>
<td>Resources to support framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Framework for scholarship of higher education teaching development; report and evaluation</td>
<td>Framework and dissemination; final report including project evaluation</td>
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2007 Survey conducted by Dr Allan Goody

• 31 responses
• 25 universities offer a ‘foundations’ unit
  18 of these units offer credit into the first unit of a Graduate Certificate
• 3 Universities only offer a Graduate Certificate
• 3 Universities do not offer any foundations program
Responsibilities

• The 25 foundations programs were all taught by central academic development units.

• Of the 3 Graduate Certificates only 1 was taught by a School of Education the other 2 were taught by central academic development units.
Broad aims

Most programs have specific aims linked to institutional priorities but one common aim expressed was:

*The program aim is to introduce academic staff to the principles, concepts and practice of teaching and learning in higher education to provide them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to operate as effective teachers in a university setting and an informed foundation upon which to continue to develop their practice in their institutional context.*
Topics included

- Reflective practice
- Experiential Learning
- Communities of practice
- Educational theory and practice nexus
- Learner-centred teaching
- Peer learning
- Action learning
- Transformative learning
- Active learning
- Collaborative learning
- Self-directed learning
- Scholarship of teaching and learning
- Life-long learning
- Conceptions of teaching and learning
- Theories of adult learning – including: effective, contextualised, meaningful and effective learning activities; need to learn; build on prior learning, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and experiences
General principles

• Draw on current academic and scholarly research literature
• Being responsive to participant needs
• Authentic and outcomes-oriented activities
• Balancing practical strategies with scholarly teaching and learning
• Aligned curriculum
• Using relevant literature to guide practice
• Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering and Gamson)
• Modelling good practice
• Embedding technology
• Peer interaction and collegial support; development of networks
• Internationally focussed
Timing

• Most programs are offered at least once a semester with three being offered three times annually and another three offered four times annually. Many have an initial intensive workshop at the beginning or prior to each semester.
Assessment

- Reflective statements and learning portfolios
- Peer observation of teaching
- Projects and action learning activities
- Teaching portfolios
- Micro-teaching
- Online discussions
- Book reviews
- Critical incident analysis
Mandatory?

- Of the 25 Foundations programs, 23 were mandatory for some or all new staff.
- The three Graduate Certificate programs reported here were not mandatory although discussions were being held to consider making them mandatory for two of those universities.
- One institution reported that their Foundations program was not mandatory and was aimed more at sessional staff and those not required to complete their Graduate Certificate program.
Strengths of the Programs

• Cross-discipline interaction of participants and the facilitation of the development of networks that often extend beyond the program
• Practical nature of the program, with interactive and experiential activities, peer activities including peer observation of teaching
• Expert presenters including academics cited as excellent teachers and other resource professionals across the university, e.g. library, student services, equity
• Support from management at various levels including Heads of School, Deans and senior executive
• Developing reflective practice
• Flexibility of the program
• Benchmarked against other programs including through the Foundations Colloquium network
• Articulation to a Graduate Certificate program
• Opportunity to introduce institutional policy and practice, e.g. graduate attributes
• Resources provided to participants
Challenges

• Finding qualified and expert staff to facilitate the programs. This is not just about having the resources to fund the programs (staff costs) but is an issue of actually finding suitable facilitators.

• Time constraints on participants. It is difficult to schedule programs to accommodate very busy academics. Time constraints also affect the ability of participants to engage in non-workshop activities, especially online activities such as discussions.

• Diversity of backgrounds, teaching abilities, experience and interests of participants.

• Insufficient time to cover material in depth while not wanting to overwhelm participants with too much work in the program. There is also the tension between a "teaching toolbox" or just-in-time approach and developing the scholarship of teaching and learning.
Challenges

• Accommodating sessional staff in the programs
• The focus on research within universities is seen as a challenge to getting academics to focus on teaching
• Resourcing
• Voluntary nature of the program
• Mandatory nature of the program
• Evaluating the impact of Foundations programs on teaching
Literature review

- Focus
  - only those documents which considered programs for new staff
  - published since 2000

- Particularly relevant report
  - Dearn, J., Fraser, K., & Ryan, Y. (2002). *Investigation into the provision of professional development for university teaching in Australia: A discussion paper. A DEST commissioned project funded through the HEIP program.*
Main issues

• causal factors (e.g. perceived importance of initial teacher development programs; teaching professionalism including the quality agenda and accreditation issues)
• different types of programs and courses (induction, mentoring programs, teaching assistant programs and short courses and post graduate certificates)
• teaching models and methods
• course and program evaluation
• potential problems (competition between teaching and research, the willingness to participate in programs and departmental cultures)
Questions identified in project proposal

The literature review highlighted issues that address questions 1, 2 and 6:

1. What are the different approaches to the preparation of academics as they commence their teaching practice in Australian and international higher education?
2. How can the impact of these programs be evaluated?
3. What are the conditions and models that best produce the desired impacts on student learning, teaching-learning scholarship, teaching as leadership and institutional practice?
4. 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?
5. What are the resources and ongoing professional development requirements of those who teach in these programs?
6. What induction processes best meet the teaching needs of academics at the time of appointment?
7. What should be included in national benchmarks for quality induction of academics to teaching and learning in Australian higher education?
Conclusions

• It is clear from the literature examined for this review that the notion that improvement in the preparation of university teachers is considered an important issue in many universities across a number of countries. However, it remains unclear whether the student learning experience is improved as a result of an improvement in the preparation of university teachers.

• Further research is required to ascertain how to achieve the project’s aim to “improve the student learning experience through improvement in the preparation of university teachers” may be achieved.
Sub-projects

5 sub-projects were identified for further research at the end of Stage One:

- Benchmarking – led by Dr Marina Harvey
- Impact – was led by Dr Carol Bowie, replacement being sought
- Models – led by Dr Erika Martens
- Professional development – led by Dr Yoni Ryan
- Resources – led by Dr Alison Bunker

Each sub-group involves staff from across a range of institutions to support the model of national collaboration and distributed leadership.
Design
Phase 2 to date

• Sub-project leaders met in Melbourne 29 – 31 July
  – Sub-project leaders developed project outlines

• Sub-project leaders meeting Adelaide 19 – 20 October
  – Sub-project leaders report to steering committee on progress
Steering committee

• Dr Margaret Hicks – UniSA (Lead institution)
• Dr Heather Smigiel – Flinders University
• Dr Gail Wilson – Bond University

Project Manager
• Ann Luzeckyj – Flinders University