Leading the Way: developing an advanced programme for leadership in learning and teaching scholarship

Murdoch University, submitted 12 June 2017

Executive Summary

Leading the Way is a WAND Small Grant project that explores the possibility of Murdoch University providing WA university staff with the opportunity to apply for a UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) Senior Fellowship. The project builds on Murdoch's current offering of a *Certificate in Learning and Teaching* which is accredited by the HEA, and enables graduates of the certificate to apply for a HEA Fellowship. This project is the next developmental step which is to offer a HEA Senior Fellowship course. Once accredited we will explore the possibility for the course to be made available to all WA higher education staff.

The project activities included an environmental scan, a literature review and cases studies lead by Discipline Champions. A number of key findings have emerged as a result of the project, in particular: the need for raising the profile of learning and teaching leadership,
building capacity in the collection of evidence and data to evaluate impact
the need to develop reflective practices focused on leadership. The case study model developed as part of this project will provide a structure for the development of the HEA Senior Fellowship course. Some recommendations are made for further investigation.

Project Context

This project builds on the Murdoch University Certificate in Learning and Teaching. The Certificate is accredited by Higher Education Academy (HEA) in the United Kingdom and was the second professional development structure in an Australian university to be accredited at Descriptors One and Two of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). In May 2016, the first Murdoch cohort completed the Certificate, enabling individuals to apply for the award of Fellowship with the HEA (FHEA). This project builds on these achievements and contributes to a pathway for the next level of professional achievement, the Senior Fellowship (SFHEA) at Descriptor Three of the UKPSF, subject to accreditation. Senior Fellowship recognises leadership and sustained engagement in Higher Education learning, teaching and assessment.

At Murdoch, a pathway for senior level engagement in learning and teaching leadership and scholarship is expected to form part of a broader Murdoch University framework of support for the development of a career in learning and teaching.

Once the programme is established at Murdoch, the co-leaders intend to apply for accreditation with the Higher Education Academy for Senior Fellowship and to make the programme accessible to the community of leaders in learning and teaching in higher education in Western Australia. As no WA institution currently has an accredited professional development scheme leading to a SFHEA award this will be an important development for the region.

Project Approach

The Leading the Way project was co-led by the team that developed the Learning and Teaching Certificate at Murdoch in 2015: Associate Dean Learning and Teaching in the School of Education (Dr Lisa Cary) and the Associate Director of the Centre for University Teaching and Learning (Mr Mike Bryant). The project team also included 3 Discipline Champions who undertook case studies (Dr Brenda Bentley, Dr Joanna

Lisciandro and Dr Alasdair Dempsey) and a Project Manager (Ms Denyse MacNish, Academic Development Coordinator L&T). Two Discipline Champions withdrew from the project due to unforeseen circumstances. A research officer (Ms Natalie Davis, Academic Development Officer) was appointed to undertake the environmental scan and literature review.

The project's core aims were to develop a research-based professional development programme for new and emerging academic leaders in learning and teaching, and to have this programme accredited by the HEA. The project addressed these aims with the following:

1. Aspects and elements of the existing Murdoch University Learning and Teaching Certificate were utilised in the development of specific elements of the future offering aimed at Leadership in Learning & Teaching.
   These elements included:
   - Creating a community of scholars (Stoll and Seashore Louis, 2007)
   - Highlighting the importance of Discipline-specific approaches (Trowler and Knight, 2000)
   - Developing Deliberate Practice (Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Romer, 1993; Timperley, 2008)
   - Professional judgement in evidence based approaches (Biesta, 2007)
   - Focusing on Authentic Assessment (Ashford-Rowe, Herrington & Brown, 2014)

2. An environmental scan and literature review

3. Learning and Teaching Case Studies by Discipline Champions

4. Dissemination to the 5 WA universities

These findings from these are discussed below.

Environmental Scan and Literature review

A number of themes emerged as a result of the environmental scan and the literature review, including:

1. In the current climate it is vital that support and direction be given to senior university staff who wish to focus their career trajectory on leadership in learning and teaching due to the fact that universities are typically skewed toward research outputs, rather than impact on teaching (Ginns, Kitay and Prosser, 2008).
2. The international debate on the scholarship of teaching and learning suggests that this space is contested and removed from the everyday lives of academic staff in university settings. Engagement with research, critical reflection and dissemination in discipline specific ways can help to bridge this divide (Kandlbinder and Peseta, 2009).
3. A constant theme in the literature was the significance (for students, individual staff, disciplinary groups and the broader university environment) of leadership in learning and teaching, thus highlighting the need for professional development programmes that focus on leadership of teaching for student learning and development. (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Quinlan, 2014)
4. Leadership in higher education learning and teaching has largely been overlooked in the leadership literature due to the fact that mainstream higher education does not value this as much as traditional notions of research and research outputs. (Quinlan, 2014).

Case Studies

Graduates from the Certificate of Learning and Teaching, who are recipients of the award of FHEA, were invited to participate in the project by extending case studies originally submitted for Fellowship. The initial case studies drew on existing views on learning and teaching in higher education as a way into a discussion about career paths and opportunities for teaching leaderships and innovation. The participants, Discipline Champions, worked in their Schools to extend and apply their work by introducing a learning and teaching innovation or intervention to colleagues.

The aim was to utilise their learnings from the Certificate to recognise and reflect upon the leadership they were already enacting as part of their current positions. This was an emergent model of engaged leadership with a student-centred approach and highlighted the fact that the Discipline Champions were being asked to reflect upon the value of their leadership work as an authentically situated leadership model focused on 'Professional Judgement' (Biesta, 2007).

Each Discipline Champion developed a case study of approximately 2000 words. These case studies were used to establish a structure for future submissions against the UKPSF as follows (abbreviated references are to Descriptor 3 of the UKPSF:

The guidelines were as follows:
1. An individual's teaching context and achievements – D3.1 & D3.3
2. Influence of the FHEA project and the move into a leadership position– D3.2 and D3.7
3. Institutional context (school, university, discipline) – D3.6
4. Engagement in literature and scholarship related to the topic – D3.5
5. Field specific reports/grants – D3.5
6. Data/evidence of impact on student learning – D3.4
7. Reflections D3

Case Studies showed a distinct commitment to leadership focused on learning and teaching:

> *I have reflected deeply on what makes for a good leader in the learning and teaching space. As a Level B Academic, there is generally very little support and training available in teaching and learning leadership. Therefore, my approach to leadership in this context is based mainly on my own intuition, as well as some general knowledge that I have about leadership more broadly (Discipline Champion 2017.)*

> *In regards to leadership in the teaching and learning space more generally, I feel that there needs to be more opportunities to develop the leadership capacity of those that hold positions of leadership in this context. It should not be a case of relying on intuition to guide behaviour and action in this domain. I suspect that not all leaders will support a collaborative and collegial approach to supporting the development of learning and teaching capacity in those that they lead (Discipline Champion 2017.)*

> *In order to foster a continued interest in high quality teaching, I am holding the space for continued focus on high quality evidence-based teaching and learning practices, as well as empower our staff to try their own innovations, while utilising the literature, embarking on careful planning and execution, and incorporating feedback (Discipline Champion 2017).*

Discipline Champions reported on their innovation or intervention and how these impacted on student learning:

> *I specifically focused on addressing the development of students' metacognition through fostering their critical reflective skills. Professional development and instruction was provided to tutors regarding the purpose and use of new and related learning resources, activities and assessment, and feedback was collected. 100% of tutors said that they used or referred to these resources in their teaching following the instruction provided, and 40% reported observing an enhanced quality of student reflection as a result (Discipline Champion 2017).*

The change made was to incorporate Peer and Self-Assessment into the marking of the group presentation. The Peer Assessment is completed by five students from the audience/class using a marking key created in consultation with the class members…the unit coordinator also completes an assessment and then moderates the peer and self-assessment marks before awarding the final mark. (Discipline Champion 2017).

I have engaged in gathering feedback from tutors … whilst they can see their students engaging in more reflection on learning, and showing evidence of developing their metacognition, they feel that this could be strengthened by further attention to the fostering of lifelong learning and independent learning skills (e.g. self-management of learning) in the course (Discipline Champion 2017).

73% of students… *showed evidence of having reflected on their motivation or goals for learning (although a further two more mentioned that they had priorities other than study and this was impacting on their learning). For the students that did reflect on their motivations and/goals related to learning, 62% of them revealed that their motivations were predominantly extrinsic (Discipline Champion 2017).*

Evaluation of the change was performed by assessing student attitudes, participation and performance with the peer and self-assessment tasks; through unit and teaching surveys, and through a specific anonymous online survey using Survey Monkey. Feedback from students was generally positive, with 75% recommending that Peer and Self Assessments be continued (Discipline Champion 2017).

Student comments reflected two areas of potential improvement: 1) more training for students about how to mark; and 2) a better understanding of the moderation process to help strengthen student understanding about the fairness of this assessment method (Discipline Champion 2017).

Project Dissemination

The project team have disseminated at the Wand Sharing Day and the Teaching and Learning Forum. One more dissemination event will occur at which the team will outline the project findings and recommendations for future investigation. Informal dissemination has occurred at regular project meetings and in Schools where the Discipline Champions are situated. Furthermore, peer reviewed journal articles are in the developmental process with the aim of being submitted for publication in late 2017.

Event date	Event, Location	Brief description of the purpose of the event	Number of participants	Number of Higher Education institutions represented
10.11.16	Murdoch University	WAND Sharing Day. Poster session, disseminated the project via the poster presentation	48	6
2.2.17	Curtin University	Teaching and Learning Forum. Dissemination by project leaders and discipline champions	246	14
21.6.17	Murdoch University	Institution dissemination. End of project and celebration	To be held 21.6.17	To be held 21.6.17

Project outputs and findings

The major outputs of the project are:

1. A timeline for the development of the initial SFHEA offering involving an advisory meeting with Higher Education Academy staff on June 22nd – 23rd 2017, prior to an accreditation submission with the aim of gaining SFHEA accreditation by the end of 2017.
2. Strengthened relationships with other Australian providers of HEA-accredited programmes. The recent creation of the Australasia HEA Programme Leaders' Network is expected to be both a resource for leadership in L&T and a community of scholars.
3. Well received presentation/dissemination events
4. Case study reports produced by the Discipline Champions
5. A manuscript for publication based on the findings of this project and a number of national and international research conference presentations.

Major findings include:

As a result of this project we have determined the specific elements needed for the future offering of a programme aimed at the HEA Senior Fellowship award. These elements include:

   a. resources focused on leadership in L&T (the environmental scan and literature review have provided a foundation for this element).
   b. revised guidelines for the development of case studies, especially focused on a model of reflective practice
   c. an outline of content for online and face-to-face modules on various aspects of leadership in L&T.

Scholarly Outputs will include one or more papers for publication. The focus of the manuscript produced as a result of this project describes our initial analysis of the environmental scan and literature review as seen through the lens of the project and the needs of the participants as they worked to produce case studies. However, there are at least two distinct stories to tell here that will probably require two separate manuscripts: 1) One focused on defining leadership in learning and teaching and developing the Senior Fellowship programme, and 2) The discussion of the theoretical lens and research methodology that needs to be developed and elucidated in order to support further work in this area. This work will be submitted to one or more of the following journals for peer-review: *Teaching in Higher Education, The Journal of Higher Education* and *Higher Education Research and Development*.

Recommendations for future investigation

1. Develop a structure for the SFHEA to be available to MU staff and staff from other WA universities.
2. Evaluate the impact of this project by working closely with the Discipline Champions with the aim of producing a journal manuscript for publication.
3. Develop a methodology to track the Discipline Champions and other graduates of the HEA accredited offerings to investigate the impact of this work and publish as an educational research scholarly output.

References

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FINAL FINANCIAL ACQUITTAL

Program: WAND Small Grant Scheme
Project Title: Leading the Way: developing an advanced programme for leadership in learning and teaching scholarship
Date: 30 May 2016

	$ Excl GST
Income:	
WAND Small Grant (Payment received from Curtin University, Learning and Teaching)	$6,000
Expenditure:	
Personnel	$ 4,176
Balance	**$1,824**
Committed:	
Teaching and Learning Forum registrations 2017	850
Dissemination event at Murdoch	406
Teaching and Learning Forum registrations 2018	510
Poster	58
Final Result	**0**

Certification

I, Henry Lam, have reviewed the above statement. I can confirm that this is a true and fair representation of expenditure associated with the OLT grant received, and the funds were expended on the conduct of the project and in accordance with the funding agreement.

Henry Lam CPA
Financial Analyst
Office of Finance,
Murdoch University

Dr Lisa Cary, Project Co-Leader

Mr Mike Bryant, Project Co-Leader