



## Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher education

### Final Report for ALTC Senior Fellowship Program

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<http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design>

<http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au>

[www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy)



Queensland University of Technology

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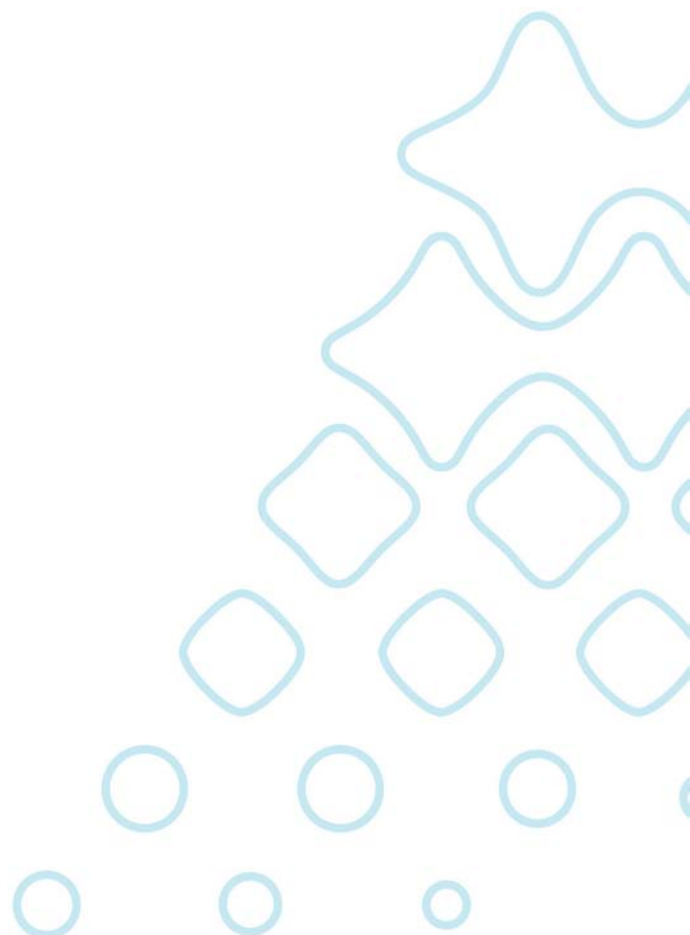
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## 1.0 Executive summary

In 2009, efforts to enhance the first year experience (FYE) of diverse commencing student cohorts may draw on an impressive body of research, practice, and policy. And yet, as Tinto has recently observed (2006-7, 2), 'substantial gains in student retention have been hard to come by' and 'there is much that we have not yet done to translate our research and theory into effective practice'. This Fellowship has sought to respond to this considerable challenge.

In formulating the Fellowship's methodology and approach, it was acknowledged that valuable empirical and other research data are available that analyse the FYE in the Australian context, signal how the patterns of student engagement have changed over time, and articulate the challenges for FYE practice. There are also many reported pockets of excellence in individual institutions, and in discrete programs and subjects of study, which seek to support the first year student in their new discipline of study. However, this essentially 'piecemeal approach' of discrete first year initiatives is rarely, if ever, linked across the institution and effort now needs to be directed at moving practice towards more holistic and sustainable institution-wide approaches and enhancements (Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005, 8.8.6). Implementing such an agenda is neither straightforward nor unproblematic: the challenge of 'bridging the gaps between academic, administrative and support programs' is substantial (McInnis, 2003, 13).

Therefore, the starting point for the Fellowship's conceptualisation was to recognise that, in all their diversity, students come to higher education to learn and that it is within the first year curriculum that students must be inspired, supported, and realise their sense of belonging; not only for early engagement and retention, but also as foundational for later year learning success and a lifetime of professional practice. Generally, the FYE work and research that has occurred to date has been *around* the curriculum, or *in aid of it*, but has not come in from the curriculum's periphery to focus on what intentional and holistic first year curriculum design, which is at the centre of the student FYE, might optimally entail. This requires a shift from primarily co-curricular 'first generation FYE approaches' to 'second generation FYE strategies' (Gale, 2009, 13; Wilson, 2009, 10) that focus squarely on enhancing the student learning experience through pedagogy, curriculum design, and learning and teaching practice in the physical and virtual classroom. A third generation FYE approach is a further collaborative and strategic leap again that requires whole-of-institution transformation. This optimal approach will only occur when first generation co-curricular and second generation curricular approaches are brought together in a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated strategy that delivers a seamless FYE across an entire institution and all of its disciplines, programs, and services. Third generation strategies will require an institutional vision for the FYE that is shared by academic and professional staff who form sustainable partnerships across institutional boundaries to ensure its enactment. After several years of dedicated and determined partnership enabling, I think we are close to claiming whole-of-institution, third generation FYE in my own university.

The adoption of a curriculum focus to the FYE seemed to be the missing link in current FYE theorising and practice. This Fellowship has therefore focussed on harnessing the curriculum as the academic and social 'organising device' – as the 'glue that holds knowledge and the broader student experience together' (McInnis, 2001, 9, 11). In this way, the curriculum, which frames the 'educational conditions in which we place students' (Tinto, 2009, 2) academically and socially, has an important role to play in first year transition, success, and retention. However, in the lead-up to the Fellowship it became clear that there is a dearth of shared wisdom available and very few accessible case study exemplars to which innovators in this field could relate.



Teachers, academic managers, and institutional learning and teaching leaders were looking for both theoretical and practical assistance in designing customised first year curriculum in response (particularly) to increasing diversity in entering cohort preparedness. The enabling of academic and professional partnerships in the pursuit of this agenda also quickly identified itself as a critical issue.

A major Fellowship outcome has been the articulation of a research-based 'transition pedagogy' (Kift & Nelson, 2005) – a guiding philosophy for intentional first year curriculum design and support that carefully scaffolds and mediates the first year learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts. This transition pedagogy is framed around the identification of six *First Year Curriculum Principles* that stand out as supportive of first year learning engagement, success, and retention (Appendix 1). These interconnected organising principles are:

- Transition
- Diversity
- Design
- Engagement
- Assessment
- Evaluation and monitoring.

Other Fellowship outcomes and deliverables include:

- Several discipline case studies exemplifying intentional first year curriculum design for transferable implementation;
- A set of 'expert commentaries' on the first year curriculum case studies collected from a range of perspectives deemed critical to a transition pedagogy;
- A web presence on the ALTC Exchange (<http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design>) for the information dissemination of these outcomes and other supporting resources, together with a Fellowship website (presently under construction at [www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy));
- An extensive engaged dissemination strategy (as detailed in Appendix 2), highlights of which include a 2008 *WA Fellowship Forum on First Year Curriculum Design* (registration capped at 110 delegates and see <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/western-australia-forum-first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design-2-december-2008>) and a 2009 *FYE Curriculum Design Symposium* featuring Professor Vincent Tinto (registration capped at 400 delegates and see <http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/>, which includes an eBook (ISBN: 978-1-74107-266-2) of a further 42 FYE exemplars);
- The 2009 *FYE Curriculum Design Symposium* DVD ([http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/fyecd2009\\_movie.jsp](http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/fyecd2009_movie.jsp)); and
- An iterative evaluation process over the life of the Fellowship.

Reflecting on the Fellowship's activities and Program outcomes, six meta-findings have been identified, drawn from a preliminary analysis of data collected from prolonged sectoral engagement, as follows:

- Sustainable partnerships between academic and professional staff are crucial to the efficacy of contemporary FYE work;
- However, these partnerships are hard work and all institutions are struggling with whole-of-institution integration, coordination and coherency;



- An obvious way to sustain the federal government's widening participation agenda and its attendant diversity is through coherent, intentional, supportive, and inclusive first year curriculum design;
- There is considerable evidence of momentum for a sector-wide consensus around the FYE; for a 'response that is unified and consistent' to 'assist individual institutions and change agents open up discussions that lead to action' (Fellowship feedback, 2008);
- That normalising and validating reference points are as important for FYE staff as they are for students: for example, "[k]nowing that every other institution is also grappling with the new and diverse cohort helps to foster collegiality on the issue of FY and what is best practice in the sector for FY' (Fellowship feedback, 2008);
- That the scope of this work is both professional *and* personal for students *and* staff, for whom the learning and teaching experience can be very good or very bad or sadly mediocre: there is much still to be done to ensure that good practice in the FYE is supported, valued, recognised, and rewarded.

Six recommendations are made for action to maintain and build on the momentum generated by the work of the Fellowship and to align the Australian tertiary sector's response with the federal government's new higher education agenda:

### Recommendation 1

That there be further investigation into, and identification of good practice examples under, each of the Fellowship's six *First Year Curriculum Principles*.

### Recommendation 2

That consideration be given to investigating and articulating sector-wide standards for the undergraduate FYE.

### Recommendation 3

That top level institutional policies should explicitly acknowledge and be attuned to the transitional learning and support needs of diverse undergraduate first year student cohorts.

### Recommendation 4

That interested academic and professional FYE staff be facilitated to establish and maintain a FYE Community of Practice.

### Recommendation 5

That the ALTC should adopt a leading role in fostering and supporting sector-wide action and consensus on the FYE.

### Recommendation 6

That an ALTC Leadership Project be commissioned around facilitating, enabling and enacting academic and professional partnerships.

Further details of these recommendations are provided in Part 9.



## 2.0 Outcomes the Fellowship was designed to achieve

This ALTC Senior Fellowship sought to investigate and identify the research- and evidence-base necessary to promote a sectoral focus on good undergraduate first year curriculum design as a second generation FYE strategy (Gale, 2009; Wilson, 2009) in aid of commencing student learning, support, success, and retention. The Fellowship was framed around the articulation of a 'transition pedagogy' (Kift & Nelson, 2005) – a guiding philosophy for intentional first year curriculum design and support that carefully scaffolds and mediates the first year learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts. A critical dimension to enacting a transition pedagogy is the enabling and valuing of cross-institutional partnerships between academic and professional staff.

As set out in the original nomination, these primary objectives were to be achieved broadly by way of the following supporting outcomes and deliverables:

- A number of discipline case studies exemplifying intentional first year curriculum design to provide good practice exemplars for transferable implementation;
- A set of 'expert commentaries' on the first year curriculum case studies collected from a range of perspectives deemed critical to a transition pedagogy, that would further describe good practice indicia;
- The distillation of a set of *Guiding Principles for a Transition Pedagogy* (subsequently renamed *First Year Curriculum Principles*) that could serve as benchmarks for intentional first year curriculum design;
- A web presence and broad dissemination strategy to engage the sector and to maximise awareness and influence of Fellowship activities and outcomes; and
- An iterative evaluation process over the life of the Fellowship.

## 3.0 Approach and methodology

The Fellowship's approach and methodology adopted the following stages –

- Assembling an intentionally large and inclusive **Fellowship collaborative team** (Appendix 3) in efforts to ensure broad sectoral engagement (26 individual collaborators representing 13 national and five international higher education institutions).

In acknowledgement of the reality of the first year context, specific attention was paid to recruiting collaborators from across academic levels (for example, academics across Levels B to E and a sessional teacher), while also being inclusive of professional staff (for example, student administration, careers and employment, and transition practitioners). Geographical representation and institution type were also considered relevant, both nationally (Australian Catholic University, Deakin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, Monash University, Queensland University of Technology, The University of Melbourne, The University of Western Australia, University of Southern Queensland, University of Tasmania, University of Technology Sydney and Victoria University) and internationally (Simon Fraser University (Canada), Syracuse University (USA), University of Auckland (New Zealand), University of Brighton (England), and University of Strathclyde (Scotland)). Once the Fellowship commenced, a student collaborator, Ms Rikki Mawad, was recruited (from University of Tasmania by way of a chance meeting during a pre-Fellowship dissemination). Professors Vincent Tinto (USA) and Mantz Yorke (UK) provided feedback on the Fellowship's progress at critical points.

- From the date of the Fellowship's award, early and on-going engagement with the **Fellowship Evaluator**, Dr Jo McKenzie, University of Technology Sydney.
- Obtain QUT **ethics approval** for data collection.  
The ethics application, under which all collaborators were considered to be participants, was submitted with three primary consent categories as follows:
  - For collaborators;
  - For 2007 institutions (to capture impact of pre-Fellowship disseminations); and
  - For workshop/seminar feedback over the course of the Fellowship.
- Creation of a presence (Group) on the **ALTC Exchange** as the Fellowship communication website: see <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design>. A Fellowship website will soon also be available at [www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy).
- Appointment of research and other **assistance**.
- Development of the **case study protocol** including the initial iteration of the *First Year Curriculum Principles*. The protocol was reviewed in the first instance by the international experts, Professors Vincent Tinto and Mantz Yorke.
- Collection of first year curriculum **case study data** (slightly expanded from original proposal):





Case Study Collaborator	Affiliation	Discipline Area
Associate Professor E. Jane Fee & Dr Janet McCracken	Simon Fraser University, Canada	Applied Sciences ('TechOne')
Associate Professor Dawn Gleeson	The University of Melbourne	Science (Biology)
Associate Professor Annah Healy	Queensland University of Technology	Education
Dr Jennifer Marchbank & Associate Professor E. Jane Fee	Simon Fraser University, Canada	Arts & Social Sciences ('Explorations')
Associate Professor Karen Nelson	Queensland University of Technology	Information Technology
Professor Jennifer Radbourne & Dr Karen LeRossignol	Deakin University	Creative Arts ('Bilby')
Ms Lisa Westcott	James Cook University	Law

- The referral of collected case study data to expert commentators for insights, observations and synthesis by their providing of '**expert commentaries**', organised with reference to a variety of research-based perspectives deemed critical to an effective first year transition pedagogy, (again slightly expanded from original proposal) as follows:

Expert Commentary Collaborator (and affiliation)	Commentary Area/ Perspective
Ms Alison Bone University of Brighton, UK	Assessment
Mrs Catherine Campbell Queensland University of Technology	Sessional staff
Dr Wayne Clark University of Auckland	Peer-to-peer interactions
Mr Colin McCowan, OAM Queensland University of Technology	Careers and ePortfolio
Ms Rachael Field Queensland University of Technology	Engaging pedagogies
Mr Bill Johnston University of Strathclyde, Scotland	Institutional context
Professor Kerri-Lee Krause Griffith University (previously The University of Melbourne)	Demographics and patterns of engagement
Ms Jennifer Leske Flinders University	Orientation and transition
Dr Stuart Levy Monash University	Diversity
Associate Professor Alf Lizzio Griffith University	Student efficacy
Ms Rikki Mawad University of Tasmania	Student perspective
Professor Noel Meyers (with Prof Yoni Ryan) University of Tasmania (now University of the Sunshine Coast)	Staff development



Expert Commentary Collaborator (and affiliation)	Commentary Area/ Perspective
Dr Bruce Moulton University of Technology Sydney	Double degrees
Dr Amanda Pearce Victoria University	Multiple entry points
Professor Yoni Ryan Australian Catholic University (previously University of Canberra)	Technology
Dr Judy Skene The University of Western Australia	Student services
Professor Janet Taylor University of Southern Queensland (now Southern Cross University)	Academic skills

- Convening of the '**Fellowship Expert Seminar**' of national and international collaborators, together with Fellowship Evaluator (10-11 July 2008, QUT), to discuss and analyse the data and resources thus far collected (case studies and expert commentaries) and to settle the next iteration of the statement of *First Year Curriculum Principles* for further dissemination and sector-wide evaluation.
- An additional sector-wide **FYE Curriculum Design Symposium** ('*FYECD 2009 Symposium*') featuring the international expert, Professor Vincent Tinto, was held on 5-6 February 2009. This event was oversubscribed and registration was capped at 400 national and international delegates (see <http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/>).
- Ongoing dissemination and evaluation
  - Delivery of numerous Fellowship and pre-Fellowship disseminations (documented in Appendix 2), including convening a *WA Forum on the First Year Experience and Curriculum Design* (2 December 2008, Edith Cowan University: see <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/western-australia-forum-first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design-2-december-2008>).
  - The Fellowship, its major outcomes and deliverables, particularly the *First Year Curriculum Principles*, have been subjected to robust iterative evaluation over the life of the Fellowship. For example: draft principles enunciated in the case study protocol were evaluated in the first instance by the international experts and then via commissioned case studies, expert commentaries and the Fellowship Expert Seminar; all Fellowship disseminations have been evaluated in accordance with ethics approval obtained and feedback sought on the efficacy of the principles; a number of teaching scholarship publications disseminated Fellowship work in a 'manner susceptible to critical review by ... professional peers, and amenable to productive employment in future work by members of that same community' (Shulman, 1998, 6).



## 4.0 Major activities and findings under the Fellowship

### 4.1 Major Fellowship activities

The Fellowship's major activities have been:

- the development of the anticipated resources (case studies, expert commentaries and *First Year Curriculum Principles*), together with associated checklists and other supporting materials (such as, for example, a *Briefing Paper on First Year Assessment*) – all available on the Fellowship's ALTC Exchange Group at <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design> and on the Fellowship website (under construction at [www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy));
- extensive engaged dissemination activities (as documented in Appendix 2);
- convening of three major Fellowship Forums (one anticipated and two not originally planned) as follows:
  - *Fellowship Expert Seminar* of national and international collaborators and Fellowship Evaluator, 10-11 July 2008, QUT (planned);
  - *WA Forum on the First Year Experience and Curriculum Design*, 2 December 2008, Edith Cowan University attended by 110 WA academic and professional staff (oversubscribed and waitlist instituted): see <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/western-australia-forum-first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design-2-december-2008> (not originally planned);
  - *FYE Curriculum Design Symposium 2009*, 5-6 February 2009, QUT attended by 400 national and international academic and professional delegates (oversubscribed and waitlist instituted): see <http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/> (not originally planned);
- the production of a DVD Learning and Teaching Resource to capture the expertise convened for the *FYE Curriculum Design Symposium 2009*. (For this resource, together with all other Symposium materials and resources, see the Symposium website at [http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/fyecd2009\\_movie.jsp](http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/fyecd2009_movie.jsp)); and
- extensive evaluation of Fellowship activities (of both Program processes and outcomes).

### 4.2 Major Fellowship findings

#### 4.2.1 Introduction

This ALTC Senior Fellowship has sought to reinvigorate the sector's approach to enhancing the critical first year undergraduate student experience by harnessing cross-institutional partnerships between academic and professional staff focussed on curriculum renewal and engagement. A major Fellowship outcome has been the articulation of guiding principles for intentional first year curriculum design and support in aid of a 'transition pedagogy' that carefully scaffolds and mediates the first year learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts (Kift & Nelson, 2005; Kift, 2005; Nelson, Kift, Humphries & Harper, 2006; Kift, 2008; Kift, 2009a). The premise underpinning the Fellowship's work has been that, in all their diversity, and acknowledging their multiple identities and changing patterns of engagement, it is within the first year curriculum that commencing students must be engaged, supported,



and realise their sense of belonging. In this way, the curriculum has an important role to play in first year transition and retention (Kift & Field, 2009).

According to Yorke (2006, 1) 'the engagement of students in higher education is influenced by a number of factors – for example, how they finance their studies; how they balance studies and part-time employment; and what they see as their aims in undertaking a program of study'. Updating this work in 2008, Yorke and Longden (2008, 2) again found that 'the major influences on non-continuation [are]: poor choice of programme; lack of personal commitment to study; teaching quality; lack of contact with academic staff; inadequate academic progress; and finance'. In the Australian context, Krause, Hartley, James and McInnis (2005, 64) found that first year students' reasons for leaving were a 'complex inter-relationship between course dissatisfaction, course preference, limited engagement, and student perceptions of academic staff and of the quality of teaching'.

Responsibility for student engagement does not reside solely with commencing students; institutions and their teaching and support staff have an obligation to provide the necessary 'conditions, opportunities and expectations' for such engagement to occur (Coates, 2005, 26). Reason, Terenzini and Domingo (2005, 2007) have argued that the personal, social and academic competences of students have to be addressed by institutionally-initiated engagement activities. Therefore, to facilitate student engagement relevantly and strategically, institutional practices should embrace a 'whole-of-student' approach that proactively takes account of the reality of diverse commencing cohorts' varying contextual life factors (Nelson, Duncan & Clarke, 2009). Factors frequently mentioned in this regard include, for example, students' educational, linguistic and socio-cultural background and experiences, their paid work and other life commitments, and their perceptions of the relevance of university learning to achieving their personal future career goals (Krause, 2006).

#### **4.2.2 Undergraduate first year curriculum and a 'transition pedagogy'**

In this work, 'curriculum' has been conceptualised very broadly to encompass the totality of the undergraduate student experience of, and engagement with, their new program of tertiary study. 'Curriculum' in this sense includes all of the academic, social and support aspects of the student experience, focuses on the 'educational conditions in which we place students' (Tinto, 2009, 2), and includes the co-curricular opportunities offered (outside the formal curriculum) with which students are encouraged to engage (Kift, 2009a). The term 'transition pedagogy' has been coined to express this broader, holistic view of curriculum and the intentional design of learning, teaching and assessment approaches that inform its enactment in ways that acknowledge the reality of the contemporary student context (referred to above).

Specifically, a transition pedagogy seeks to mediate the diversity in preparedness and cultural capital of entering students, now so endemic in our mass system. The concern is that if we do not come in from the periphery (for example, of de-contextualised, 'bolt-on' skills courses) and harness the curriculum as the academic and social 'organising device' – as the 'glue that holds knowledge and the broader student experience together' (McInnis, 2001, 9, 11) – student take-up of our otherwise disparate and 'piecemeal' efforts to support their FYE (Krause *et al.*, 2005, at 8.8.6) is left to chance. Put simply, the curriculum is what students have in common, is within our institutional control, and is where time-poor students are entitled to expect academic and social relevance, support and engagement. A transition pedagogy in this sense is a logical 'second generation FYE strategy' that moves beyond the traditional 'first generation FYE approaches' which mainly centred on co-curricular activities (Gale, 2009, 13; Wilson, 2009, 10). A third generation FYE approach is a further collaborative and strategic leap again that requires whole-of-institution transformation. This optimal



approach will only occur when first generation co-curricular and second generation curricular approaches are brought together in a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated strategy that delivers a seamless FYE across an entire institution and all of its disciplines, programs, and services. Third generation strategies will require an institutional vision for the FYE that is shared by academic and professional staff who form sustainable partnerships across institutional boundaries to ensure its enactment. After several years of dedicated and determined partnership enabling, I think we are close to claiming whole-of-institution, third generation FYE in my own university.

While it is recognised that first year *students* are very diverse and can enter the curriculum at multiple entry points (and that we need to attend carefully to supporting those multiple entry points), the focus here is firmly on the first year *curriculum* (rather than the experience of commencing students), noting that the diverse nature of student progression also means that non-first year students may enrol in first year subjects of study.

This Fellowship's approach to a curriculum-focussed transition pedagogy is further validated by virtue of its alignment with the six engagement scales identified and measured by the *Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)* (ACER, 2009). These scales are:

- academic challenge,
- active learning,
- student and staff interactions,
- enriching educational experiences,
- supportive learning environment, and
- work integrated learning.

A transition pedagogy seeks to attend to each of these aspects of student engagement in a coherent, embedded, and integrated way, utilising the curriculum to mediate as many student-institution interactions as possible to enhance the broader student experience.

### 4.2.3 Six First Year Curriculum Principles

A major outcome of this Fellowship has been the identification of six generic *First Year Curriculum Principles* – a set of interconnected organising principles that stand out as supportive of first year learning engagement, success, and retention across disciplines. It is accepted that good curriculum design is not of itself sufficient but should be enacted concurrently with good teaching and first year support.

From the outset, this Fellowship has had in mind Tinto's observation (2006-7, 1-2) that 'student retention is one of the most widely studied areas in higher education', the result of which has been

*an ever more sophisticated understanding of the complex web of events that shape student leaving and persistence ... But for all that, substantial gains in student retention have been hard to come by... More importantly, there is much that we have not yet done to translate our research and theory into effective practice.*

A particular focus of this work has been therefore to identify *First Year Curriculum Principles* that (Kift, 2008):

- are research-based (but move *from theory to action*);
- can help guide and inform practice; and



- are supported by practical tips, checklists, examples, and strategies for implementation (to move *from* principle *to* practice), all of which implementation tools are now available via the Fellowship Group on the ALTC Exchange (at <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design>) and also on the FYE Curriculum Design Symposium 2009 website (at <http://www.fyecds2009.qut.edu.au/index.jsp>) and Fellowship website (under construction at [www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy)).

In determining what ‘makes a good principle’ in the conceptualisation stage, regard was had to the work of David Nicol (2007, 2) in his identification of good assessment and feedback principles:

*Firstly, a good principle should capture a core idea from the published research – that is there should be research evidence to support its implementation. Secondly, a good principle should have broad relevance: it should guide practitioners as they design learning or assessment tasks for students, but it should not be too narrow or specific. In other words, there should be flexibility, that is, there should be many ways of implementing a principle depending on the discipline and the teaching and learning context. Thirdly, where there is a set of principles there should be minimal overlap across them – as far as possible they should be defined independently. Fourthly, the effectiveness of the principles should be higher when more principles are operationalised in the same learning design. Fifthly, good principles should also help those wishing to evaluate their assessment designs or their implementations in practice.*

The *First Year Curriculum Principles*, set out more fully in Appendix 1, genuinely attempt to adhere to these indicia. The principles are:

- Transition
- Diversity
- Design
- Engagement
- Assessment
- Evaluation and Monitoring.

#### **4.2.4 The sector’s response to the First Year Curriculum Principles**

The principles, the theory underpinning their development, and examples of their application at both the whole-of-program level and individual subject level, have been the subject of numerous Fellowship disseminations to academic and professional staff (as identified in Appendix 2) to test their resonance and to seek feedback on their conceptualisation.

Typical of the responses and feedback obtained over the course of these Fellowship disseminations are the following statements that demonstrate the sector’s acceptance of the validity of the principles, and acknowledge their flexibility and applicability across contexts and delivery modes:

- Versatile set of principles that has horizontal and vertical application across institutions – Structured framework & methodology for practical implementation
- We are all vectors for transmitting the virus of FYE ... each of us can change our institutions if only in small ways or in some programs
- Neat, comprehensive & provide authoritative base for “selling” FY



- A set of tools/principles that can be used to design, construct & evaluate FY programs
- A great stepping stone/foundation to continu[e] programs/research etc within my (the uni) individual context
- The generalisability of the principles – will seek to implement in our first year courses
- The principles have applicability across all disciplines.
- Worth serious consideration – it's not a 'can do', it's a cue for reflection first
- I like that it's given me a roadmap for discussions on restructuring our Health Foundation year
- New way to start a discussion about these ideas at my university – i.e., reinvigorate the topic of transition
- FYE language to use at my university – ideas, networks, a set of manageable principles
- Helpful, provides the language (conceptual tools) for common conversations between academics (teachers & researchers) & academics & professional staff
- They provide a useful framework for practical (as well as academic rhetoric) conversations, so that non-academics can engage in ideas about learning
- They don't seem to be specific to first year but apply to all curriculum design
- Will this be identified as a curriculum for all universities to follow?
- OK as a START – give me practical examples and ideas I can implement?
- Actual frameworks & process are v. helpful for those at the starting to build stage. We will start with these – who knows where we'll end up?
- Excellent – extremely relevant to MBBS etc. Too much is assumed about FY med students because they're graduate entry. They are assumed to be 'adult learners'. However, most have only had to regurgitate what they heard in lectures and few easily synthesize the broad range of material they have to cover
- I ... believe the principles are 'global' and can be contextualised to the distance learning context.
- [Good for] "[n]ormalising" FYE into academic curriculum through constructive teaching approaches
- Principles – are basis of extending PD of all staff
- The principles address the needs of students and not academics and that is the way it should be
- [Has] relevance to 1st yr postgraduate coursework students ... many of the students (in their 30s & 40s) are just as challenged by their engagement with uni study ... especially online
- CEQ assesses students' perceptions of whole degree programs, yet without an integrated approach such as FYE then study appears to students as a disaggregated set of courses/units. The integrated approach is essential across all programs and years

#### 4.2.5 *Six meta-findings as a consequence of sectoral engagement*

When reflecting on the Fellowship's activities and Program outcomes, six meta-findings have become evident, which have consequences for the sector and are now discussed.



## (1) Partnerships are crucial

In 1999, Coaldrake and Steadman wrote about the changing nature of academic work, the diffusion and blurring of institutional roles as staff move across functions, and the necessity to make best use of the skills of all university staff – academic, professional and sessional – ‘who collectively are working to advance the institution’ (1999, 16). It is suggested that nowhere is the ‘convergence of academic and non-academic work’ probably more vital ‘to the ‘real’ work of the university’ (Coaldrake & Steadman, 1999, 15-16) than in the critical first year.

It has become abundantly apparent that individual effort and commitment to the enhancement of the first year student experience generally, and particularly in its curriculum dimension, is necessary but not sufficient. For this work to be implemented fully, well and sustainably, institutional players must integrate and coordinate their various excellent, but often quite disparate, first year initiatives and work together to transcend the silos of academic, administrative and support areas to enact a holistic, systematically-managed, vision for the FYE that is truly learning-focussed and is indeed greater than the sum of its many parts. This is the essence of the third generation approach to the FYE discussed above.

Encouragingly, a consistent message from across the sector is that academic and professional colleagues alike appreciate the need for coordinated and sustainable partnerships: overburdened academics keenly feel the need for the expert assistance and support that professional staff are able to provide, especially in the face of increasing student diversity in preparedness, while professional staff are very eager to work with academics (for example) beyond Orientation Week and in aid of academic skills development.

Fellowship Feedback to this effect included the following:

- I would very much like to see a co-ordinated university-wide transition program, delivered in a timely fashion across the first year of study
- [Like to hear more about] issues & ways academics can work with support/non-academics to enhance transition; the two need to communicate more
- Remind[ed] me to plan & act strategically (ie, to have conversations with senior managers)
- Networking with uni staff from a range of roles & resp[onsibility] for first year
- We all own the curriculum, and we all have a duty of care to enact it fairly, creatively and coherently

## (2) Partnerships are hard work

As obvious and desirable as comprehensive, whole-of-institution approaches to our students’ FYE might be, bridging ‘the gaps between academic, administrative and support programs [remains] a substantial challenge’ (McInnis, 2003, 13). All institutions are struggling with whole-of-institution integration, coordination, and coherency, in the shadow of concerning evidence to the effect that the quality of the student experience may vary more *within* than *between* institutions (Kuh, 2007). Learning leadership (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008) and coherent governance structures are critical in this regard to identify, harness, and upscale existing goodwill and practice and to enable partnerships with the capability to work across and within existing organisational structures and processes, both academic and professional, to create a shared vision of the FYE as ‘everybody’s business’ (Kift, 2008).





Fellowship feedback to this effect included the following:

- I found this session really useful. It was great to hear what people in other [areas of the university] are doing. Sometimes our team feels quite alone in what we are trying to do – rest of school not concerned.
- The principles rely on teamwork between staff (academic and administrative) and students. This is extremely hard with lack of equity and a diverse population
- Still don't know how to get academics to work together for a coherent program that is suitably supported by the first year courses & experience
- Further collaboration with academics ... was highlighted in many sessions – the dual roles and need for contextualisation of skills development
- The structures have to change to support staff in supporting students
- Overall, lack of senior management's real support for partnerships of shareholders to develop curricula

The finding here is that, unless these whole-of-institution conversations and interactions are facilitated and determined efforts are made to coordinate and mainstream otherwise disparate and disconnected initiatives, the potential for positive impact of well-intended FYE strategies will be limited by perceptions of role capability. Even more disappointingly, our hard work will not present to students as intentional, relevant, seamless, or important. As frequent Fellowship feedback made clear:

- [There is a] difference in perspectives between academic(s) and professional staff groups [regarding] what we are about
- Probably better for academics who are able to facilitate change. SS (student services) are very limited in power BUT knowledge gained can be introduced to sow seeds to academics we have built a rapport with.
- Curriculum change often can't be implemented by lecturers – and yet we are the ones who deal with the students!
- Often the people that need to be at these forums are not. Eg – preaching to the converted! I need my HoD or program co-coordinator at these events – I simply can't implement these changes we so desperately need
- [a barrier is] Gaining support/resources for implementation from Heads of Department
- “things” will not be implanted if the people with “power”, ie leaders are not providing the necessary resources & infrastructure & structure for a whole-integrated curriculum. PS. The ones who are not here should be those who are here!
- Can we invite Deans, etc, to be “infected” with this movement
- Fabulous but depressing ... There is so much I would like to do but seemingly so little that I actually can. The principles are something we all know but I question whether we have the will to act

And sadly, in the absence of institutional commitment to take first year student education and retention seriously (Tinto, 2009), all too frequently the coalface FYE reality is quite bleak:



- I would have said “very satisfied” [by the session] if it did not make me depressed. I am [subject coordinator] of a first semester first year [subject] with about 600 students (400 on my campus, 200 on another). I am the only academic on my campus, so have to do all the teaching and administration. I am not allowed to implement many of your ideas.

On a more positive note, it is also clear that an increasing number of learning leaders (Scott *et al.*, 2008) are already engaged:

- I can use my position to do something! – Will push for a Dean’s Award and a VC’s Award specifically for outstanding contribution to FYE/CD – I’m taking a “pay it forward” approach ... as a HoS I am investing & supporting a range of initiatives proposed by first year teachers to enhance FYE

### (3) Widening participation sharpens focus on criticality of this work

With the federal government’s recent endorsement of the Bradley Review’s ambitious widening participation targets – that 40% of 25-34 year-olds should attain at least a bachelor-level qualification by 2025 (currently at 32% attainment) and that 20% of low socioeconomic status students should be enrolled in undergraduate higher education by 2020 (currently around 15-16%) – critical questions arise as to our sector’s considered pedagogical response. As the federal government has identified in its recently released vision for our sector, *Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System* (Australian Government, 2009, 15):

*A positive student experience has an impact on student retention and further study. Maintaining and improving the quality of teaching, learning and the student experience is a critical factor in the success of universities and other higher education providers, both domestically and in the international education market. This is particularly important for adult learners who comprise a large proportion of students who require additional support.*

*To achieve the Government’s ambitious targets there will also need to be an increased emphasis on improving the student learning experience in order to boost retention, progress and ultimately, completion rates.*

As a sector, how do we propose to support, include, retain, and graduate student cohorts who will enter our programs with even greater diversity in preparedness and cultural capital than ever before? Quite fundamentally, we will need to consider changing, both culturally and structurally, the prevailing character of the first year student experience to ensure that student success is not left to chance, at least in those aspects that are within our institutional control (Kift, 2009b).

An obvious way to support widening participation and diversity is through coherent, integrated, intentional, supportive, and inclusive first year curriculum design. Each of the *First Year Curriculum Principles* identified under the Fellowship has a role to play in this regard, while the ‘Diversity’ principle, in particular, makes the imperative plain. Crucially, safeguards need to be embedded to protect against deficit approaches that seek to blame students for any ‘preparedness shortfalls’. The existing literature and research on supporting the widening participation agenda in the UK argues persuasively that, in addition to the many ways in which student diversity can be harnessed to enrich the educational experience, ‘the changes to curriculum provision



and learning, teaching and assessment, which have occurred alongside the transition from an elite to a mass participation HE sector, benefit all students and can have a positive impact on higher level and critical thinking skills' (Shaw, Brain, Bridger, Foreman, & Reid, 2008, 48).

The issue of how we go about adapting our curricular approaches and institutional cultures to meet the academic and socialisation needs of diverse student cohorts is already challenging our universities. This challenge is only set to increase as our mass sector expands even more. Careful attention to first year curriculum design in the way advocated under this Fellowship must be a critical component of any response to deliver the 'better levels of engagement' recently demanded by the federal government (Australian Government, 2009, 14). As Professor Trevor Gale, Director of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, has said (2009, 10):

*Like Kift, I too argue that the most effective site to engage in changing higher education is from the centre. Student support services are important and essential but, as I argued earlier, they are largely peripheral to the mainstream of higher education. A student equity agenda for higher education must centre on the student learning environment and experience if it is to challenge the exclusion of certain bodies and what they embody.*

In fact, Gale would go further and advocate for a different sort of 'third generation FYE' approach; 'a more sophisticated approach to student equity and social inclusion [that] entails the creation of space in higher education not just for new kinds of student bodies but also for their embodied knowledges and ways of knowing ... [that] has relevance for the epistemologies of all socio-cultural groups.' (2009, 14).

#### **(4) Momentum for sector-wide consensus**

There is a strong feeling across the sector – which has only grown since the Bradley Review targets have been endorsed by the federal government – that a 'whole sector' response to better managing and enhancing the first year student experience is required. To a large extent, such an approach would resonate with the equity recruitment agenda that seeks to tackle poor participation rates, particularly by low socioeconomic status and Indigenous students. Equity practitioners and researchers are unambiguous in their view that recruitment to create aspiration where none currently exists, together with strategies to mediate educational disadvantage, require sector-wide and inter-sector cooperation. In order that the higher education sector is in a position to deliver on the promise made in that aspiration-raising and myth-busting exercise, we need to be very clear about what the educational experience will look like once these students arrive at our doors. There is a very real possibility that vulnerable students might be recruited to our programs only to find that our learning environments and cultures are exactly as they had originally feared they would be. As a responsible and responsive sector, we need to be vigilant to guard against such a disillusioning outcome. A consensus around sector-wide FYE standards or benchmarks would be of considerable assistance to meet this challenge.

Fellowship feedback in this regard, exhorting a coherent sector-wide FYE response, included the following:

- [A] sector response that is unified and consistent will assist individual institutions & change agents [to] open up discussions that lead to action
- [Need] support from the top – not just at institutional level but across institutions
- I now feel I can draw upon the wisdom & exp. of other unis rather than 'battle' in isolation



- The power and richness of sharing what works and ... doesn't
- we battle the same issues across continents
- problems I face at my institution are common. Gives hope that change might occur one day soon as a result of national need
- [want] a scaffold that could be adopted & customized for each institution – these Design Principles do that. Having them adopted at govt. level would give validation
- I've learnt that there are a very large number of people in different institutions who want to use curriculum development to enrich the first year experience
- Other organisations have developed some wonderful initiatives & I will look forward to networking further with the remarkable people I've met through this symposium
- Use framework with ALTC and sector backing to give 'clout' for implementation in even small regional universities
- Identifying a consortium of HEIs willing to adopt a Transition Pedagogy – possibly as a major strategic response to 'Bradley' or some other Environmental Influences
- Sector framework – principles for curriculum/student engagement

#### **(5) Normalising & validating are important**

Many of the strategies promoted for first year student success, retention, and a sense of academic and social belonging have at their heart an imperative to normalise the experience for individual commencing students and to reduce any sense of isolation and 'otherness' they might be feeling. Areas of activity frequently addressed in this regard include: anxieties around the multiple transitions encountered; stress, uncertainty and perceptions of inadequacy in a new academic environment; the 'hit-the-wall' period when the enormity of the workload is realised for the first time and motivational issues frequently come to the fore; and the endemic lack of certainty about program and career choice now experienced by so many school leavers.

Over the course of the Fellowship, it has become apparent that these normalising strategies and opportunities are as important for academic and professional FYE staff as they are for first year students. For example, Fellowship feedback included the following:

- Knowing that every other institution is also grappling with the new and diverse cohort helps to foster collegiality on the issue of FY and what is best practice in the sector for FY
- reassuring to find that everyone faces the same issues with resources and feeling disempowered
- [others] are in similarly complex and precarious institutional contexts to my own.
- Theoretical foundations/ refs for approaches I currently do intuitively – very affirming
- Reassurance of ideas & heading in right direction
- validation of personal practice
- having validation for practices and values regarding the FY is beneficial
- Affirmation of my beliefs, ideas & practices



- That I am not alone in my role (& its issues, constraints, etc)
- You are inclined to feel sometimes that you are on your own out there. To hear what others are doing is very important
- Problems are common across countries, institutions, programs – so sharing it v. important

In terms of the preconditions necessary to progress this agenda, the power of validation cannot be underestimated. Its usefulness is linked to the previous finding that sector-wide responses to and consensus about first year issues are desirable.

#### **(6) The FYE is both professional *and* personal**

The final, if not unexpected, observation is that the FYE context is not simply a function of dispassionate training or career choice for most staff and students; it is also a very personal episode for both groups, for whom the experience may be very good or very bad or sadly mediocre. Evidence of the passion, enthusiasm and commitment with which colleagues across the sector, professional and academic alike, engage in and with this vital work is inspiring and humbling. However, without the appropriate reward and recognition structures in place to value their efforts, and without an institutional commitment that places emphasis on the FYE (including the allocation of necessary recurrent resourcing to support this work) burnout, dissipation, and disenchantment are frequent outcomes.

Again, students and staff in the first year arena have much in common; when goodwill, energy, and expectations go unacknowledged, unsupported, unrewarded, and unmediated, disengagement is the consequence. From both the staff and student perspective, there can be little justification for such a result – this is core institutional business and individuals' future careers and their sense of well-being are at stake. If the sector really wanted to, it could do better. This Fellowship makes some suggestions as to how better outcomes might be mainstreamed and supported.

Fellowship feedback to this effect included the following:

- Walking back from the presentation – several of us were exchanging horror stories from our university days.
- [The role play of a first year lecture] was so convincing and seemed to be channelling several professors ... Aren't the students all stupid though? If I hear that one more time in [my school] I will scream!
- Mostly it renewed my commitment and enthusiasm to persevere, despite opposition from colleagues
- I felt a part of this & wanted to know that this wasn't going to stop here ... need momentum
- First conference ever! I was really thankful to see that there are so many people so committed to FYE. As a semi-recent graduate I am happy to be a part of assisting in changing the stigma around FYE at my institution & using this knowledge to provide a "service" to students which I myself missed out on.
- How to get change weary undervalued non-research active staff valued organisation wise!
- Sometimes everything seems so complex & overwhelming but here are 6 design principles that put structure and meaning into the work I do.



- 'battle'; 'depressed'; 'desperately needed'
- Inspiring, motivating and depressing!
- I came cynical of the value of the symposium, and have left as another carrier of the FYE virus – will certainly attempt to incorporate into my teaching practice



## 5.0 Factors critical to Fellowship outcomes

### 5.1 Introduction

The award of this ALTC Senior Fellowship on first year curriculum design generated considerable interest in the Australian higher education community and immediately led to a large number of invitations being extended to present at various institutions, forums and conferences in a pre-Fellowship capacity. This quite sustained, pre-Fellowship activity, that occurred after the announcement of the Fellowship's award but prior to its nominated commencement, is recorded in Appendix 2 and without doubt worked to raise the profile of the ALTC and the Fellowship. As subsequent feedback revealed, even at such an early stage, many of these engagements laid the groundwork for some strategic change around enhancing the first year student learning experience in the host institutions. All of this pre-Fellowship activity was either self-funded or paid for by the inviting institution.

As from November 2007, I have been in ongoing consultation and discussion with the Fellowship evaluator, Dr Jo McKenzie (Academic Manager, Institute for Interactive Media and Learning, University of Technology Sydney). These discussions have proven extremely valuable in further refining and enhancing the Fellowship approaches, most particularly in conceptualising a way to leverage much of the early, pre-Fellowship activity referred to above

Another significant, not-unrelated, benefit that flowed almost immediately after the award of the Fellowship was my appointment as QUT Director, First Year Experience (FYE) (on a secondment from the Faculty of Law to the DVC(Academic)'s Office). This opportunity enabled me to precede the Fellowship work with a range of initiatives that provided a 'test-bed' for the Fellowship Program. The Director, FYE role also enabled some concerted attention to be directed to the FYE generally, and to first year curriculum design specifically, at my home institution: for example, during the currency of the Director's role, a community of practice was established to support all nine of QUT's faculties that were then engaged in first year curriculum renewal.

### 5.2 Critical factors

Against this brief introduction, a number of factors have been critical to the success of the Program and its outcomes. These include:

1. ***The composition of the national and international collaborative team (academic and professional staff) and their generous engagement with the Fellowship Program***

The collaborative team assembled for this Fellowship Program was intentionally large and inclusive (in the multiple ways referred to at 3.0 above), in efforts to ensure broad sectoral engagement and representation (26 individual collaborators representing 13 national and 5 international higher education institutions). As mentioned at 5.1, the awarding of the Fellowship created considerable interest across the sector, and several new collaborators were added to the team originally proposed (see Appendix 3). Together with the Fellowship evaluator, most of the national and international collaborators were able to attend the Fellowship Expert Seminar held in July 2008 at QUT, regarding which all attendees reported very positively. Professors Yorke and Tinto, who were unable to attend, both contributed to the Fellowship's success in other substantial ways: Professor Yorke particularly in the Program's early conceptualisation phase and through his evaluation of the original application and of the Case Study Protocol; and Professor Tinto by his participation in the *FYECD 2009 Symposium* held in February 2009.



Though managing such a large and diverse team proved challenging, especially given the delayed release of the ALTC Exchange (which underpinned the proposed communication strategy), the thinking behind its composition has proven sound and has clearly led to a very collegial network for sharing research, innovation, and good practice in FYE learning, teaching, and support. In particular, the built-in discipline diversity and the partnering of academic and professional colleagues have been critical to the efficacy of the Fellowship work and to the validation of the transition pedagogy approach. I am very grateful for the intellectual and personal generosity of my collaborators, including my evaluator, who all gave willingly and intensely. I see their passion for the FYE reflected throughout the sector and, as a sector, we should be indebted to them and their many institutional colleagues for bearing the brunt of this difficult and unglamorous work, which is so important to the quality of our students' experience.

In this latter regard, it is also worth remarking that, at the time the Fellowship application was submitted, two of the national collaborative team had received national teaching award recognition (Gleeson and Meyers). At the time of writing this report, an additional ten national team members have been accorded recognition for their teaching excellence by way of Carrick/ALTC teaching awards or citations (Field, Healy, Le Rossignol, Lizzio, Mawad, McCowan, Nelson, Skene, Taylor, Westcott), in one instance receiving both a citation and a teaching award (Lizzio). In many ways, I think this is reflective of the depth of commitment, passion, and excellence the work in this field attracts. It is worthy of celebration.

## **2. *The support of my home institution***

It may seem trite to say, but home institution support is critical. The secondment to an institutional role as Director, FYE consequent on the award of the Fellowship was a particular and unexpected boon and gave me the intellectual space and opportunity to think through further and then test Fellowship assumptions, together with the freedom to engage with outside-QUT interest in the period leading up to the Fellowship. The outcomes for QUT (referred to in 6.0 below and detailed more fully in Kift (2008)) would suggest that the Director role has had some long-term and sustainable impact on institutional policies, processes, practices, and procedures. I draw particular attention to these matters because, as many of us know, it is often most difficult to have impact in one's own institution. I am certain that the 'external' endorsement of the Fellowship's award had an initiating role to play, but credit must be given to QUT management for allowing the context to develop in which enhancements could flow from that modest starting point. The professional and personal support and interest of many QUT colleagues in the Fellowship Program has also been validating and sustaining, from both our perspectives.

## **3. *Broad sectoral engagement with the Fellowship Program***

The immediate engagement and interest of the sector following the award of the Fellowship, which led to the large number of invitations to present before and during the Fellowship (and which still continue to flow) have been gratifying and further validation of the importance of this agenda. No invitation was rejected (except in one instance where there was a direct clash of dates), which at times made for a frenetic pattern of dissemination. All of these various disseminations are set out in Appendix 2 and some discussion around the different types of presentations requested appears at 7.0 below. This sectoral engagement has been critical in meeting the ALTC objectives of the Fellowship Scheme, particularly as regards:





- advancing and raising the profile of learning and teaching in Australian higher education and the prestige associated with the pursuit of excellence in teaching;
- fostering and building partnerships;
- collaboration and collegial networking; and
- stimulating strategic change in higher education institutions.

It is to illustrate this point that the variety of invited presentations, some at best tangential to core Fellowship business, has been included at Appendix 2. The ambassadorial role of the Fellowship for the ALTC and for excellence in learning and teaching more broadly is evident in many of them. For example, the opportunity for an ALTC Senior Fellow to address academic colleagues across all disciplines aspiring for promotion in their institution is a powerful avenue for raising the profile of the pursuit of excellence in teaching and discussing the relevant indicia for same with academics who may not have been exposed to these notions previously.

A number of institutions requested return appearances, which were accommodated, while the inventiveness of some of the invitations was interesting (for example, one institution invited me for a week as a 'Carrick Fellow in Residence'). My expenses for these invitations were paid by the inviting institution and this enabled me to preserve Fellowship monies with the result that I had sufficient in reserve to fund the *FYECD 2009 Symposium* with Professor Tinto in February 2009, for which no budget allocation had been originally set aside.

Two further aspects of the breadth of this engagement are also worthy of mention. First, the Fellowship opportunity, as framed by the ALTC, includes the development of 'personal skills and profile' (Fellowship Guidelines). This has certainly been my experience. The status of 'Fellow' has led to numerous opportunities and invitations for me to engage with other eminent national and international learning leaders, the experience of which has been quite phenomenal. Specifically: I have been invited onto reference groups, panels and reviews by many of these experts; have been asked to comment on draft documentation (for example, the 2008 AUSSE Report); and to conduct reviews of first year programs and teaching. Interacting with the other ALTC Fellows has also been intellectually, professionally, and personally satisfying and many of us co-operate in each others' Programs.

The second breadth aspect I should like particularly to draw out has been the opportunities afforded to engage with so many diverse groups whose professional practice touches on the FYE (as more particularly itemised in the disseminations at Appendix 2). Particular examples include: the *National Association of Prospective Student Advisors (NAPSA)*, sessional staff conferences, the *Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL)*, the *National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE)*, and the *Equal Opportunity Practitioners in Higher Education Australia (EOPHEA)*.

#### **4. Proportional professional and academic staff engagement**

One of the most rewarding aspects of the Fellowship has been the opportunity to facilitate partnerships and interactions between academic and professional staff. (The breakdown of staff by category who attended Fellowship disseminations appears below at 7.0.)

As has already been identified, these partnerships are vital to the quality of the student experience of the first year. Professional staff have been most interested and accepting of Fellowship activities and outcomes, even given their conceptualisation as curriculum-focussed. Without exception, I have found



professional staff very keen to engage with their academic colleagues in this work and to be interested in models for how cross-institutional partnerships might be facilitated and advanced. The 'convergence of academic and non-academic work' (Coaldrake & Steadman, 1999, 15) is the future of the modern university and the FYE is where this convergence operates at its transparent best or worst. For me, the fact that the Fellowship culminating event, the *FYECD Symposium 2009*, attracted almost equal representation from academic and professional staff was a considerable achievement. I think that significant inroads have been made into promoting sustainable academic and professional staff collaborations and partnerships under the auspices of the Fellowship and that, generally, professional staff now feel their FYE contributions are better recognised and valued across the university mainstream.

#### **5. *Early and frequent engagement with Fellowship evaluator***

The importance of early and frequent engagement with the Fellowship evaluator cannot be overstated. Since before the Fellowship's formal commencement, I have been very fortunate to have had regular contact with Dr Jo McKenzie (UTS), who has fulfilled the role of both critical friend and evaluator. To a large extent, she has also kept me on track, especially when competing agendas and demands threatened to distract me from the core of the Fellowship activity. Dr McKenzie has attended various Fellowship events, including the Fellowship Expert Seminar held at QUT in July 2008 and the *FYECD 2009 Symposium*, has interacted with the Fellowship collaborators, and has seen the Fellowship Program evolve over its extended lifetime. On her early advice, I have kept a Fellowship Diary of various disseminations, activities, contacts and reflections, dating from the time of the original Fellowship application (July 2006) to the present. This has proven to be a valuable and reliable mechanism for recording the Program's progress over time, particularly in aspects that are difficult otherwise to capture (for example, the multitude of consultation-type enquires that are received when pursuing a Program such as this). As she also recommended, I obtained ethics approval to collect data regarding the impact of many of the pre-Fellowship disseminations. All of this material, together with all the formal evaluations of Fellowship presentations and examples of the Program's conceptualisation maturing over time (as evidenced in the engaged disseminations), have been made available to Dr McKenzie for her final evaluation report.

#### **6. *The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education and the Australian Government's Response***

As has been noted elsewhere in this report, in many ways the timing of the Fellowship Program has been optimal. Prior to the release of the *Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008), the legitimacy of a focus on intentional, responsive first year curriculum design as fundamental to first year learning engagement, success, and retention had already been validated under the Fellowship in the context of existing endemic diversity. In the wake of the Bradley Review and the Australian Government's response to it, a sensitive curriculum focus and the transition pedagogy it supports have become even more crucial to higher education's future management of the student experience and associated retention strategies. At this precise moment, like never before, higher education's attention is concentrated squarely on the ramifications for learning and teaching that the foreshadowed changes in access and participation will bring about. The Fellowship's contribution to this agenda is significant and timely and its relevance to the current environment has been a critical factor in its success.



## 5.3 Lessons learnt

In a Program of this nature, especially when the Fellowships Scheme is still in its relatively early days and all stakeholders – the ALTC, the Fellows, collaborators, institutions and the sector – are feeling their way, it is inevitable that there are lessons to be learnt. It is without doubt that the Fellowships Scheme is an extremely valuable initiative and I have been very fortunate to have been one of the three inaugural Senior Fellows.

Some of the lessons learnt are as follows:

- *When does a Fellowship begin and end?* A key lesson for me has been that, whatever the contract dates say, there seems to be no definite beginning or obvious conclusion to a Fellowship Program. I formally conducted my Fellowship over 2008 and into early 2009 (to hold the *FYECD 2009 Symposium*), though significant Fellowship-related activity occurred across 2006-2007 and is still ongoing. This is perhaps as it should be and may evidence the wisdom of awarding the Fellowship in an area of such obvious and pent-up sectoral interest in the first place. But the lesson is that there needs to be a realistic expectation (on the part of the Fellow and others) of what can be achieved in a limited period of time. If the Scheme lives up to its promise, Fellowship activities and outcomes should provide the basis for ongoing engagement, thought and action. It may be that there is a way in which Fellows could be supported to some more limited extent to continue with work that strikes a rich vein of interest, perhaps in some way similar to the Conference Funding support for teaching and program award winners to present at learning and teaching conferences and forums, or by way of a discrete grant funding opportunity made available to past Fellows for this purpose. I leave the Fellowship with a strong feeling of work left unfinished, just at the time when it is really gaining traction.
- *The role of Fellow.* I found the Fellowship to be a huge responsibility and was desperate to 'do the right thing' in response to the trust that had been placed in me. I was lucky to have had the support of such a great team of collaborators, who were as passionate and as engaged in this work as I was, but I still have to say that the role of Fellow is quite a lonely one, the demands of which can be somewhat overwhelming. The constant flow of a variety of requests and invitations, and the tendency to become something of a 'clearing house' for learning and teaching generally, and not just within the Fellowship area, require dedicated management, regarding which it would have been useful to have some reference points. I am not certain that there is a great deal that can be done to ameliorate this. As a critical mass of Fellows grows in an individual institution (if it does) this group may meet (and this occurs now at my own institution under the auspices of the DVC (Teaching Quality)). Fellows might get together on a state-by-state basis (which the early Queensland Fellows did a few times) and the ALTC should continue to provide (and perhaps fund as Fellowships finish) opportunities for both 'old' and 'new' Fellows to come together on a regular basis. There should be some potential for harnessing the ALTC Fellows more usefully as an expert group, the possibilities of which, though discussed, have yet to be exploited. The advent of the ALTC Discipline Scholars initiative strikes me as having the makings of a similar group who may benefit, like the Fellows, from being brought together regularly (possibly in tandem with Fellows' meetings, if that could be arranged).
- *Residual responsibilities.* There will always be difficulties in juggling residual institutional responsibilities over the course of the Fellowship Program and it is probably not feasible to expect that anyone can fully extract themselves to focus



solely on a Fellowship. I can only surmise that it must be even more difficult for the Associate Fellows (now Teaching Fellows), who have an even shorter period of time to manage their various responsibilities.

- *Ethics approval.* It was critical to this Fellowship Program that ethics approval be obtained. Though the application was low-risk and unproblematic, it nevertheless did result in a substantial delay to the start of Fellowship activity. It might be useful for the ALTC to assist Fellows and their institutions to think through the ethics approval process. The issue of publishing anonymous institutional student feedback data is also one that would benefit from a whole-of-sector approach.
- *Finance matters.* Individual institutional processes and requirements in financial matters can be almost debilitating, while the variation between institutions is confounding. It might be a naïve suggestion, but perhaps some ALTC approved standards for budget expenditure might be of assistance and at least obviate the necessity to, for example, complete tens of individual travel applications requiring collaborators' signatures to facilitate attendance at approved (and funded) Fellowship events.
- *ALTC Exchange.* Following some initial teething issues around the (then) Carrick Exchange's funding and start-up date, the ALTC Exchange has been used as the Fellowship's major information provision strategy (at <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design>). The *First Year Experience and Curriculum Design Group* on the Exchange is one of the larger communities, with 65 subscribers. The ability to close access to an Exchange Group while resources are being developed is welcome; however there have been real challenges in encouraging colleagues to engage with the Exchange and its resources. I have disseminated detailed 'Instructions for joining the ALTC Exchange and subscribing to the First Year Experience and Curriculum Design Group' for the use of both my Fellowship collaborators and the broader sector (see [http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/RES\\_ALTCEXchangeFYECDSUBscribelInstructions.pdf](http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/RES_ALTCEXchangeFYECDSUBscribelInstructions.pdf)) in efforts to make this process as simple as possible but it would seem that, for whatever reasons, the perceived barriers outweigh the perceived benefits at this time. The advent of Version 2 of the Exchange will hopefully attend to some of these issues. In the meantime, over the coming months, I propose to establish another website for information provision, to ensure that the resources developed under the Fellowship are more obviously available to the sector and its interested practitioners (Fellowship website under construction at [www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy)).
- *Flexibility is essential.* There is a certain inevitability about the need for adjustments to almost any Fellowship Program, however carefully planned it may have been: adjustments in timing and budgeting; around changes in collaborator details (positions, responsibilities and commitments); national and international experts' availability; and the like. The flexibility of the ALTC in this regard is essential and has been greatly appreciated.



## 6.0 Transferability of approaches and outcomes

From its earliest conceptualisation, a core Fellowship premise has been that the indicia of good first year curriculum design are generic and, once articulated (see now the *First Year Curriculum Principles* at Appendix 1), would be transferable across disciplines. Fellowship evaluation and feedback on the principles would also seem to indicate that the principles are transferable across delivery modes (for example, with application to the distance education mode) and entry levels (for example, with application to the postgraduate context). Further evidence of transferability may be seen in:

- the exemplars of curriculum design collected under the Fellowship across a range of disciplines and institutional types;
- the expert commentaries produced; and
- the myriad of applications identified in the First Year Curriculum Design Symposium, both in keynote presentations and in the 42 FYE Showcase Submissions (re latter see [http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/FYE\\_ShowcaseAbstracts\\_17Mar09\\_final.pdf](http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/FYE_ShowcaseAbstracts_17Mar09_final.pdf)).

Further, the Fellowship principles have recently been accorded frequent mention in the submissions received for the 12<sup>th</sup> *Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference 2009* (see <http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/>), again with implementation evidenced across a variety of institutions and contexts. The many national and international invitations received to disseminate Fellowship findings across a range of institutional types and in numerous discipline contexts (as recorded in Appendix 2) similarly demonstrate desirable transferability and the potential for universal uptake and application.

In my own institution (QUT), the Fellowship and its focus on our students' FYE has had a substantial impact across the university, largely as a consequence of the secondment to the position of inaugural Director, FYE over 2006-2007 consequent on the award of the Fellowship (see 5.0 above). The clearest evidence of impact at QUT is at the policy level, in conjunction with which considerable cultural change has been facilitated and is still ongoing. The process by which this occurred has been described elsewhere (Kift, 2008). While it is appreciated that policy change of itself means little in the final result if not supported by a range of other processes, practices and strategies (many of which are described in Kift (2008)), as Professor Lynne Hunt (2009) made clear in her keynote address to the *FYECD 2009 Symposium*, it is crucial for institutional leadership to get the 'context right for staff, to get the context right for students'. Supportive and evidence-based policy is a key ingredient in getting that 'context right'.

Specific instances of institutional FYE policy enhancement at QUT in this regard include the following:

- A 2008 *First Year Experience Policy* at [http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C\\_06\\_02.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C_06_02.jsp) that represents an agreed context for institutional action around the FYE at QUT and refers to '[FYE] Policy Principles' and a conceptualisation of 'Orientation and Transition'. Under this Policy sits the more detailed *Orientation & Transition Policy Protocols* (at [http://www.otq.qut.edu.au/guidelines/protocols\\_orienttrans.pdf](http://www.otq.qut.edu.au/guidelines/protocols_orienttrans.pdf))
- A 2009 *Curriculum Design Policy* at [http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C\\_04\\_02.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C_04_02.jsp) that refers to the *First Year Curriculum Principles* of student diversity, engagement, the role of first year curriculum in whole-of-program design, assessment, and 'standardised monitoring and intervention processes for student



engagement in the first year'. Under this Policy sits the more detailed *FYE Policy Protocols*, which set out the Fellowship's six *First Year Curriculum Principles* (at [http://www.otq.qut.edu.au/guidelines/protocols\\_fye.pdf](http://www.otq.qut.edu.au/guidelines/protocols_fye.pdf))

- A new *Assessment Policy* (for 2010) under which sits the more detailed *Assessment Policy Protocols* (at [http://www.otq.qut.edu.au/policy/guide/protocols\\_assessment\\_april09.pdf](http://www.otq.qut.edu.au/policy/guide/protocols_assessment_april09.pdf)). The *Assessment Policy Protocols* specifically refer to critical first year assessment enablers from the *First Year Curriculum Principles* such as: being consistent in assessment practices to reduce first year confusion; ensuring that the process skills as well as the content knowledge needed to complete the assessment task have been taught or practiced; that an assessment related activity should be scheduled within the first four weeks to provide students with feedback on how they are progressing; and that the assessment items within individual subjects and across the first year program should be designed and scheduled to facilitate the monitoring of student engagement in learning
- Recognition of the challenges faced by first year students by way of FYE statements in Student Administration Policies: see, for example, the *Supplementary Assessment Policy* 6.4.3 regarding 'supplementary assessment supporting transition into the University (First Year Experience)' at [www.mopp.qut.edu.au/E/E\\_06\\_04.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/E/E_06_04.jsp); and *Unsatisfactory Academic Performance and Exclusion Policy* 6.7.5 specifically exempting students from eligibility for exclusion when they are within the first 96 credit points of their undergraduate program (that is, the equivalent of one year's fulltime study) at [www.mopp.qut.edu.au/E/E\\_06\\_07.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/E/E_06_07.jsp)
- A FYE perspective has been included in the university's learning and teaching leadership roles (at [http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/B/B\\_03\\_05.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/B/B_03_05.jsp)).

Additional examples of how the principles have been utilised in and/or adapted or adopted to other institutions and contexts include:

- Proposed inclusion of a target in one institution's operational plan to embrace a first year transition pedagogy to underpin a university-wide approach to transition with a view to improving retention and completion rates;
- To assist an institution develop its own FYE strategy (where none existed previously);
- As a basis for mapping an international benchmarking partner's approach to transition to determine relevance and applicability for an Australian university's development of its own approach to transition;
- Use of the Fellowship checklists in staff development: for example, in 'Foundations Programs' [for beginning teachers] and with sessional staff;
- For program and/or individual subject evaluation and benchmarking;
- With supporting resources (exemplars, checklists, etc) to renew the first year curriculum; for example, for university-wide curriculum review;
- As a basis for leveraging funding for FYE programs: for example, for at-risk student initiatives; to support up-scaling of peer-to-peer initiatives; and the like;
- As a mechanism to identify disparate initiatives and coordinate up-scaling and gap analysis;
- As a 'New way to start a discussion about these ideas at my university – ie, reinvigorate the topic of transition' (Fellowship feedback, 2008);
- As influential in (Fellowship collaborator) Bill Johnston's forthcoming book, *The First Year at University* (2010).



The Fellowship evaluations, both formal and engaged over the life of the Fellowship, also have evidenced the transferability of approaches and outcomes. Professor Vincent Tinto, when in Australia for the *FYECD 2009 Symposium*, had the opportunity to consider and evaluate this work. He has done so on the *FYECD 2009 Symposium* DVD under the 'Design' principle ([http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/fyecd2009\\_movie.jsp](http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/fyecd2009_movie.jsp)) and in the statement that appears at Appendix 4.



## 7.0 Dissemination of Program outcomes

### 7.1 Engaged dissemination

Extensive dissemination of Program outcomes has been undertaken across the higher education sector nationally and, to a lesser extent, internationally. Invitations to disseminate are still being received and are being accommodated as best I am able. The summary of disseminations appears at Appendix 2.

More than 150 individual presentations are recorded in Appendix 2, to over 6000 academic and professional staff, in 21 Australian universities, six international universities, at 22 national conferences/ forums and at three international conferences. These presentations have been broken down into percentages by institutional grouping type<sup>1</sup> as follows:

**Table 1:** Fellowship Disseminations by Institution Type

Presentations by Institution Type	Percentage
Home institution (QUT)	15.5%
Group of Eight	5.4%
Australian Technology Network (excluding QUT)	13.5%
Innovative Research Universities Australia	8.8%
New Generation Universities	6.8%
Non-aligned universities	12.8%
Carrick/ ALTC	4.1%
International institutions	7.4%
Multi-institution/ conference presentations	25.7% (22.3% Australian; 3.4% international)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Extrapolating from the feedback received on Fellowship disseminations, which asked participants to nominate their institutional position, the following indicative breakdown of academic and professional staff engagement in the Fellowship Program can be discerned:

**Table 2:** Fellowship Disseminations by Position Description

Institutional Position	Percentage of Total across
Academic	45.6%
Academic Developer	15.1%
Manager	9.5%
Student Support	8.7%
Student Services	7%
Faculty Professional	4.8%
Library	2.8%
Other	6.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1%</b>

<sup>1</sup> As per Australian Education Network, *Australian University Groupings*. Retrieved June 10, 2009 from <http://www.australian-universities.com/groupings-of-australian-universities.php>





The types and subject matter of the disseminations requested by the sector (often with two or three different presentations occurring during the one institutional visit) have been quite broadly based. I have roughly categorised them as follows:

- variously on FYE related topics both internally to QUT and externally to the sector;
- on a range of teaching and learning leadership topics, including leveraging Carrick/ALTC opportunities;
- to specific cohorts of staff about matters of interest to those groups (for example, Early Career Academics; sessional teachers; Carrick/ALTC Award nominees; student recruiters; university committees; Heads of School; Divisional areas (for example, Student Services or Student Support); groups going for promotion, etc);
- at dedicated Carrick/ALTC Forums organised by either the ALTC itself or by other Carrick/ALTC sponsored initiatives (for example, Carrick Law Discipline Based Initiative; Associate Fellow Erica McWilliam's Creativity Showcase; ALTC Discipline Based Initiative (DBI) on Interdisciplinary Learning; Address to Brisbane ALTC Citations Ceremony; at Carrick/ALTC Fellows Forums; etc); and
- in my home discipline of law on legal education, as a legal educator who has been acknowledged as a learning and teaching leader.

## 7.2 Information provision dissemination

A Group has been established on the ALTC Exchange, which at the time of reporting has 65 subscribers and is one of the larger Exchange communities. See <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design>.

This Exchange Group is organised under four key resource areas ('Books'):

- First Year Curriculum Design Case Study Exemplars
- Perspectives on First Year Curriculum Design (Expert commentaries on the case study exemplars)
- Fellowship Collaborator Details
- Further Fellowship Resources

As mentioned above in 5.3, there have been real challenges in encouraging colleagues to engage with the ALTC Exchange and its resources. I have disseminated detailed 'Instructions for joining the ALTC Exchange and subscribing to the First Year Experience and Curriculum Design Group' for the use of both my Fellowship collaborators and the broader sector (see [http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/RES\\_ALTCEXchangeFYECDSubscribeInstructions.pdf](http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/RES_ALTCEXchangeFYECDSubscribeInstructions.pdf)) in efforts to make this process as easy as possible.

Symposium materials, resources and the *FYECD 2009 Symposium* DVD are available on the Symposium website. See <http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/>. A table setting out total hits per month on the Symposium website this year to date, appears below

**Table 3:** Total Hits per month (year to date) on FYECD 2009 Symposium Website

<b>Month</b>			Aug 08	Sept 08	Oct 08	Nov 08	Dec 08
<b>Total hits</b>			210	1262	4152	2647	3490
<b>Month</b>	Jan 09	Feb 09	March 09	April 09	May 09	June 09	July 09
<b>Total hits</b>	8385	8429	1336	783	1242	1065	409



Over the coming months, I propose also to establish another website for information provision, to ensure that the resources developed under the Fellowship are more obviously available to the sector and its interested practitioners (Fellowship website under construction at [www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy)).



## 8.0 Strategic links to ALTC sponsored activities

A number of strategic links were established over the life of the Program between this Fellowship and other ALTC Fellowships and projects. These include –

- Invited presentation (with Dr Karen Nelson), *Enhancing Transition at QUT (ET@QUT)* in 'Good Practice Workshop in Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching Panel' to Carrick Discipline-Based Development Forum, 15-16 March 2007. Hobart, Hotel Grand Chancellor.
- Participation in Professor Erica McWilliams's Carrick Associate Fellowship through involvement as Session Chair (1 of 4) in the *National Creativity Showcase*, 7 December 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology.
- Participation in *Australian ePortfolio Symposium 2008* as Facilitator, Plenary Panel discussion on *Current issues and future needs*, 7-8 February 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology.
- Invited presentation, *Harnessing ePortfolio to support and enhance the first year student experience*. In *Australian ePortfolio Symposium 2009*, 9-10 February 2009. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology.
- Occasional Address at Brisbane ALTC 2008 Citations Ceremony, 4 August 2008. Brisbane, Customs House.
- Invited presentation, *Building staff and institutional engagement in ALTC programs and opportunities: some personal reflections*, for Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development's Promoting Excellence Initiative Forum (QLD, NT and Nthn NSW), 27 August 2008. Kelvin Grove, Queensland University of Technology.
- Participation in ALTC Law Discipline Base Initiative (DBI) 2007-2008, led by Professor Gary Davis (and see background paper on graduate attributes at <http://www.cald.asn.au/docs/KiftExtractsGradAttrPaper.doc>).
- National collaborator, Professor David Boud's ALTC Senior Fellowship
- National collaborator, Professor Angela Brew's ALTC National Teaching Fellowship
- Project leader, 2009 ALTC Priority Project Grant, *Curriculum renewal in legal education: articulating final year curriculum design principles and a final year program* (2010-2011), led by Queensland University of Technology, partnering with Griffith University and University of Western Australia.
- Evaluator, ALTC Competitive Grant Project, *The Whole of University Experience: retention, attrition, learning and personal support interventions during undergraduate Business studies*, (2008-2010) led by University of the Sunshine Coast, partnering with Monash University, Griffith University, University of South Australia, Murdoch University, University of Southern Queensland.
- Evaluator, ATLC Competitive Projects Program, *A Collaborative Multi-faceted Approach to Address the Gaps Between Student Expectation and Experience at University* (2010-2011) led by University of Adelaide, partnering with University of South Australia, Flinders University, Adelaide High School, Prince Alfred College.



- Reference Group member, ALTC Priority Project, *A threshold concepts focus to curriculum design: supporting student learning through application of variation theory*, (2008-2010) led by The Australian National University, partnering with Queensland University of Technology, The University of Sydney, University of Technology, Sydney
- Miscellaneous links including
  - Multiple invitations to join several Carrick/ALTC Grant applications in various capacities;
  - Numerous referee reports for various Carrick/ALTC initiatives (Fellowships, Citations, Teaching Awards, etc); and
  - Informal advice to potential Fellowship and award applicants, both QUT and externally.



## 9.0 Recommendations and the future

The current policy and reform agenda of the federal government in response to the findings of the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley *et al.*, 2008) aims to ‘transform the scale, potential and quality of the nation’s universities and open the doors of higher education to a new generation of Australians’ (Australian Government, 2009, 5). Specifically, the government has committed significant resourcing to ‘support high quality teaching and learning, improve access and outcomes for students for low socio economic backgrounds, build new links between universities and disadvantaged schools, reward institutions for meeting agreed quality and equity outcomes, improve resourcing for research and invest in world class tertiary education and infrastructure’ (Australian Government, 2009, 5).

Once recruited to our higher education institutions, these ‘new generation’ students are entitled to expect that we will not leave their learning success to chance and that the ‘educational conditions in which we place [them]’ (Tinto, 2009, 2) will be intentionally engaging, relevant, inclusive, supportive and social. The government is clear about its expectations in this regard (Australian Government, 2009, 15):

*To achieve the Government’s ambitious attainment targets there will also need to be an increased emphasis on improving the student learning experience in order to boost retention, progress and ultimately, completion rates.*

The burden that the first year curriculum bears in this environment is heavier now than ever before. This Fellowship has provided a starting point for this challenging work and considerable momentum has built in the sector around embracing the framework of a transition pedagogy as a mechanism for moving the widening participation agenda forward, sustainably and coherently. The oversubscription of the *FYECD 2009 Symposium*, which attracted 400 professional and academic staff in February 2009, is clear evidence of the sector’s interest in this regard and its appetite for the identification of transferable models of programs, partnerships, policies and practices that are able to be adopted and adapted within and across institutions. Of course, much remains to be done and it is imperative that the momentum that has been generated under the auspices of the Fellowship not be allowed to dissipate.

It is in this context that the following six recommendations are made:

### Recommendation 1 – Further investigation into each of the six curriculum principles

It is recommended that there be further investigation into, and identification of good practice examples under, each of the Fellowship’s six *First Year Curriculum Principles* as discrete areas of enquiry and for ongoing resource development.

### Recommendation 2 – Development of sector-wide FYE standards

It is recommended that consideration be given to investigating and articulating sector-wide standards for the undergraduate FYE. A framework for FYE standards would identify good practice benchmarks, by way of agreed indicators and metrics, for quality assurance assessment both within individual universities and across the Australian higher education sector. Such a framework would desirably be supported by transferable good practice exemplars and should also identify institutional policies, practices, systems and processes that support and value good FYE practice in its academic and professional dimensions.



### **Recommendation 3 – Institutional policy acknowledgement of FYE**

It is recommended that top level institutional policies should explicitly acknowledge and be attuned to the transitional learning and support needs of diverse undergraduate first year student cohorts and the important role that the first year curriculum plays in their learning engagement, success, and retention.

### **Recommendation 4 – Maintenance of a FYE community of practice**

It is recommended that interested academic and professional FYE staff be facilitated to establish and maintain a Community of Practice to continue to share learning and experience of good first year curriculum design, teaching and support, to foster scholarship and research, and to provide a forum for dissemination of good practice. The *FYECD 2009 Symposium* delegates who agreed to join a FYE list might constitute the initial membership for such a Community.

### **Recommendation 5 – ALTC leadership of FYE sector-wide consensus**

Given Fellowship feedback that sector-wide action and consensus on the FYE is desirable, it is recommended that the Australian Learning and Teaching Council should adopt a leading role in fostering and supporting further investigation into good first year curriculum design, teaching, support, and practice. For example, existing ALTC initiatives and programs might adopt a 'FYE focus' in their current objectives and/or priorities (for example, a FYE 'Discipline Scholar' might be appointed; a specific priority area of attention to the FYE might be embedded within existing grant schemes; a Special Initiative around the FYE might be considered; etc).

### **Recommendation 6 – ALTC Leadership Project around academic and professional partnerships**

It is recommended that an ALTC Leadership project be commissioned with a view to assisting institutions to identify and support transformational leadership within their individual institutional contexts to facilitate, enable and enact the academic and professional partnerships this Fellowship has found to be so crucial to the delivery of a whole-of-student approach to first year student experience and engagement.



## 10.0 Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the very generous support and assistance that has been provided to me by so many people and institutions, all of whom and which have contributed to the success of the Fellowship:

- My family – Philip, Alice and Grace – have put up with many absences and attention deficits. They are long suffering, a fact of which they are keenly aware, and I am grateful to them.
- The Australian higher education sector has been extraordinarily willing to embrace the Fellowship Scheme and to engage with me in my Fellowship role.
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# Appendix 1: First Year Curriculum Principles



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## Articulating a Transition Pedagogy

### *First Year Curriculum Principles*

#### **Preface**

Intentional first year curriculum design should mediate a relevant, involving and social transition to tertiary academic study that is not overwhelming to the new learner in the discipline.

It is acknowledged that 'first year students', as multiple cohorts, are extremely diverse. The diverse nature of student progression also means that non-first year students may enroll in first year subjects of study. This articulation of a 'transition pedagogy' – a guiding philosophy for intentional first year curriculum design and support that carefully scaffolds and mediates the first year learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts – is concerned with undergraduate first year curriculum and co-curriculum design, rather than with the experience of commencing students. It also acknowledges that good first year curriculum design must be concomitant with good first year teaching and proactive, just-in-time, support and service provision.

The first year of university study is arguably the most crucial time for engaging students in their learning community and equipping them with the requisite skills, not only to persist, but to be successful and independent in their new learning throughout their undergraduate years and for a lifetime of professional practice in which they will be continually required to learn and to engage with new ideas that go beyond the content of their university program. All members of the University, students and both professional and academic staff, have a responsibility in this regard to ensure that the first year curriculum is engaging, supportive, intentional, relevant and social. This statement acknowledges that certain curriculum design principles stand out as supportive of first year learning engagement, success and retention.

### *Broad Organising Principles for First Year Curriculum*

Good first year curriculum design should abide by the following interconnected organising principles to facilitate all students fully achieving desired learning outcomes.

#### **Transition**

The curriculum and its delivery should be designed to be consistent and explicit in assisting students' transition *from* their previous educational experience *to* the nature of learning in higher education and learning in their discipline as part of their lifelong learning. The first year curriculum should be designed to mediate and support transition as a process that occurs over time. In this way, the first year curriculum will enable successful student transition into first year, through first year, into later years and ultimately out into the world of work, professional practice and career attainment.

## Diversity

The first year curriculum should be attuned to student diversity and must be accessible by, and inclusive of, all students. First year curriculum design should recognise that students have special learning needs by reason of their social, cultural and academic transition. Diversity is often a factor that further exacerbates transition difficulties. The first year curriculum should take into account students' backgrounds, needs, experiences and patterns of study, and few if any assumptions should be made about existing skills and knowledge.

'Diversity' in this context includes, for example:

- membership of at-risk or equity groups;
- widening participation (for example, non-traditional cohorts);
- students' existing skills and knowledge; and
- patterns and timing of engagement with the first year curriculum (for example, mid-year entry).

## Design

First year curriculum design and delivery should be learning-focussed, explicit and relevant in providing the foundation and scaffolding necessary for first year learning success. This requires that the curriculum must be designed to assist student development and to support their engagement with learning environments through the intentional integration and sequencing of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

## Engagement

Learning, teaching, and assessment approaches in the first year curriculum should enact an engaging and involving curriculum pedagogy and should enable active and collaborative learning. Learning communities should be promoted through the embedding in first year curriculum of active and interactive learning opportunities and other opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration and teacher-student interaction.

## Assessment

The first year curriculum should assist students to make a successful transition to assessment in higher education, while assessment should increase in complexity from the first to later years of curriculum design. Critically, students should receive regular, formative evaluations of their work early in their program of study to aid their learning and to provide feedback to both students and staff on student progress and achievement.

## Evaluation and monitoring

Good first year curriculum design is evidence-based and enhanced by regular evaluation that leads to curriculum development and renewal designed to improve student learning. The first year curriculum should also have strategies embedded to monitor all students' engagement in their learning and to identify and intervene in a timely way with students at risk of not succeeding or fully achieving desired learning outcomes.



## Appendix 2: Summary of engaged disseminations

*Name of presentation/dissemination.* Type of presentation/dissemination and to whom, Date of presentation/dissemination. Location, University. (Approximate number of attendees)

### Pre-Fellowship Presentations

August 2006:

- *The QUT First Year Experience Project: Engaging First Year Students.* Invited presentation to QUT Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, 25 August 2006. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (30)

September 2006:

- *The QUT First Year Experience Project: Engaging First Year Students.* Invited presentation to QUT Faculty of Business Dean's Management Group, 7 September 2006. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (20)

October 2006:

- *First Year Students: Bending the odds in their favour.* Keynote presentation to QUT First Year Experience Staff Forum, 5 October 2006. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (90) [[See presentation ppts.](#)]
- *QUT's First Year Experience Project.* Invited presentation to QUT Faculty of Business, School of Advertising, marketing and Public Relations, 20 October 2006. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (20)
- *First Year Experience at QUT.* Invited presentation to QUT Faculty of Business, School of Management, 20 October 2006. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (20)
- *Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher education.* Presentation to Carrick Fellows Forum, 26-27 October 2006. Sydney, Carrick Institute.

November 2006:

- (With Dr Karen Nelson) *ET @QUT.* Presentation to QUT Teaching and Learning Large Development Grants Forum, 7 November 2006. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (20)
- *21<sup>st</sup> Century Legal Education: What good learning and teaching might look like.* Invited presentation to USQ Law School, 24 November 2006. Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland. (15)
- *Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher education.* Invited presentation, 30 November 2006. Brisbane, University of Queensland. (25)

February 2007:

- *DVC(A) L&T Priority Projects: Enhancing First Year Student Experience.* Invited presentation to QUT TALSS Teaching Fellows Workshop, 2 February 2007. Brisbane, Royal on the Park. (25)



- *Teaching at the Coalface – The Role of Sessional Staff in the Student Learning Experience*. Keynote presentation to USC Sessional Staff Development/Induction Day 2007, 12 February 2007. Sippy Downs, University of the Sunshine Coast. (70)
- *Carrick Awards for Australian University Teaching 2007*. Presentation to potential Carrick Citation nominees at QUT TALSS Staff Development Workshop, 14 February 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (10)
- (With Jude Smith) *Teaching & Learning Priority Projects: Working Parties Thank You and Update*. Presentation to QUT community on DVC(A) Priority Projects, 14 February 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (60)

#### March 2007:

- *Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher education*. Fellow Presentation to Carrick Fellows Forum, 7 March 2007. Sydney, Crowne Plaza Darling Harbour. (35)
- (With Eve Cuskelly) *Promotion for Academic & Research Staff*. Presentation to QUT Levels D and E Promotion Information Session, 9 March 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (20)
- *Transition to QUT and the First Year Experience*. Keynote presentation to QUT Sessional Academic Program, 10 March 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (200)
- *The Challenges for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Legal Education*. Presentation to QUT Law School, Review of the Bachelor of Laws Orientation Forum, 13 March 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (40)
- (With Dr Karen Nelson) *Enhancing Transition at QUT (ET@QUT)*. Invited presentation as part of 'Good Practice Workshop in Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching Panel' to Carrick Discipline-Based Development Forum, 15-16 March 2007. Hobart, Hotel Grand Chancellor. (60)
- University of Tasmania, 28-29 March 2007
  - *First Year Developments: Carrick Senior Fellowship on FYE and QUT's Enhancing the FYE Program*. Invited presentation to Student Transition and Retention Taskforce, 28 March 2007. Hobart, University of Tasmania. (11)
  - *The First Year Experience: Challenges and Opportunities for Heads of School*. Invited presentation to Talking Heads (Heads of School Forum), 28 March 2007. Hobart, University of Tasmania. (8)
  - *Learning and Teaching's Role in Academic Career Progression*. Invited for Early Career Academic Stream, T&L Staff Development Program. 28 March 2007. Hobart, University of Tasmania. (30)
  - *Supporting and Engaging First Year Students*. Invited presentation to sessional staff, 28 March 2007. Hobart, University of Tasmania. (6)
  - *Whole of University Response to FYE: Carrick Senior Fellowship on FYE and QUT's Enhancing the FYE Program*. Invited presentation to University of Tasmania Student and Academic Services, 29 March 2007. Barilla Bay, Hobart. (12)
  - *The Carrick Fellowship Scheme*. Invited presentation to University of Tasmania Learning and Teaching Leaders, 29 March 2007. Hobart, University of Tasmania. (8)



- *Challenges for Legal Education (Starting with the First Year)*. Invited presentation to University of Tasmania Faculty of Law Staff Seminar, 29 March 2007. Hobart, University of Tasmania. (20)

#### May 2007:

- (With Dr Karen Nelson) *Our Students' First Year Experience: QUT's Response*. Presentation to QUT Faculty of Health FYE Forum, 8 May 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (25)
- *Effective and efficient teaching for active learning in law*. Invited presentation to University of Adelaide Law School, 28 May 2007. Adelaide, University of Adelaide. (15)

#### June 2007:

- (With Georgia Smeal) *Carrick Awards for Australian University Teaching*. Presentation to CAAUT Information Session for QUT nominees, 5 June 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (10)
- James Cook University, 7-8 June 2007
  - *A Professional Conversation with Sally Kift*. Invited Presentation for JCU Teaching for Learning Week, 7 June 2007. Cairns, James Cook University. (20)
  - *A Professional Conversation with Sally Kift*. Invited Presentation for JCU Teaching for Learning Week, 8 June 2007. Townsville, James Cook University. (40)
- *Exploiting the Synergies between Teaching, Research and Service for ECAs*. Keynote presentation to ATN Early Career Academics Symposium, 28-29 June 2007. Sydney, University of Technology Sydney. (50)

#### July 2007:

- *Conference Opening Address: FYE, PASS and institutional responses*. Invited presentation to Third National PASS Conference, 2 July 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (40)
- (With Dr Karen Nelson & Tracey Creagh) *Implementing a Blueprint for Transition Success*. Refereed paper. In *10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the First Year in Higher Education: regenerate, engage, experiment (FYHE)*, 4-6 July 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (60)
- (With Prof Ian Cameron) *Driving Change in Learning & Teaching via National Collaborative Projects*. Presentation. In *30<sup>th</sup> Annual HERDSA Conference*, 9-11 July 2007. Adelaide, Hilton Adelaide. (30)
- *Critical issues for teaching, teaching teams, and student engagement*. Keynote presentation to University of South Australia, Division of Business, Teaching and Learning Colloquium, 12 July 2007. Adelaide, University of South Australia. (50)
- *Australian Academy of Law Launch*. Invited presentation to the launch of the Australian Academy of Law, 17 July 2007. Brisbane, Government House. (80)

#### August 2007:

- *The First Year Experience: Everybody's Business*. Keynote presentation at The University of Auckland FYE conference, 2 August 2007. New Zealand, The University of Auckland. (100)



- Deakin University, 16-17 August 2007
  - *Making the first year experience work*. Presentation at Public Seminar for Deakin University Faculty of Arts, 16 August 2007. Melbourne (Burwood), Deakin University. (50)
  - *Improving retention by embedding through the curriculum (1) and (2)*. Presentation at workshop for Deakin University Faculty of Arts, 16 August 2007. Melbourne (Burwood), Deakin University. (25)
  - *Making the first year experience work*. Presentation at Public Seminar for Deakin University Faculty of Arts, 17 August 2007. Geelong, Deakin University. (50)
  - *Combining our resources: Faculty and the Institute of Teaching and Learning (ITL) liaisons*. Presentation at Workshop for Deakin University Faculty of Arts, 17 August 2007. Geelong, Deakin University. (25)
  - *First year Initiative Retention*. Presentation at Forum for Deakin University Faculty of Arts, 17 August 2007. Geelong, Deakin University. (25).

September 2007:

- *Publishing in Legal Education*. Presentation to QUT Faculty of Law Research Forum, 5 September 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (20)
- University of Technology Sydney, 12-14 September 2007
  - *Effective and Efficient Teaching for Active Learning in Law: Current Challenges*. Invited presentation to UTS Law School Teaching Festival Staff Seminar, 13 September 2007. Sydney, University of Technology Sydney. (40)
  - Participation in three Roundtable discussion groups on graduate attributes for the UTS Law School Teaching Festival, 13 September 2007. Sydney, University of Technology Sydney. (32)
  - Participation in UTS Law School Research Seminar Forum to assist discussion on research/teaching nexus, 14 September 2007. (35)
- Victoria University, Wellington, NZ, 19-21 September 2007
  - *First Year Experience: Student Services*. Invited presentation to Victoria University Student Services Group, 20 September 2007. Wellington, Victoria University. (15)
  - *Legal Education and the First Year Experience*. Invited presentation to Victoria University Law Faculty, 20 September 2007. Wellington, Victoria University. (4)
  - *First Year Experience: Pathways Group*. Invited presentation to Victoria University Pathways Group, 20 September 2007. Wellington, Victoria University. (8)
  - *Pathways to a Successful First Year Experience*. Keynote presentation for Ako Victoria, 21 September 2007. Wellington, Victoria University. (60)
  - Keynote Speaker Question and Answer Session at Ako Victoria, 21 September 2007. Wellington, Victoria University. (30)

October 2007:

- Flinders University, Adelaide, 4-5 October 2007
  - *The First year experience and how might we improve it?* Keynote presentation to Flinders University First Year Experience Discussion Forum, 4 October 2007. Adelaide, Flinders University. (25)





- *The First Year Experience: First Year Working Party*. Invited presentation to Flinders First Year Working Party, 4 October 2007. Adelaide, Flinders University. (10) [See presentation ppts]
- *Supporting sessional staff to achieve positive student learning outcomes*. Invited presentation to Flinders course/topic coordinators, 4 October 2007. Adelaide, Flinders University. (15)
- *Legal Education and the First Year Experience*. Invited presentation to Flinders Law School, 5 October 2007. Adelaide, Flinders University. (15)
- *Contemporary Issues in Legal Education*. Invited presentation to Flinders Law School, 5 October 2007. Adelaide, Flinders University. (15)
- (With B. Morton) *2008 Carrick Awards Scheme Teaching Excellence*. Presentation to QUT 2008 CAAUT nominees, 11 October 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (15)
- University of Newcastle, NSW, 25-26 October 2007
  - *Articulating a transition pedagogy for the First Year Experience*. Invited presentation for University of Newcastle Seminar, Centre for Teaching and Learning, 25 October 2007. Newcastle, University of Newcastle. (20)
  - *First Year Teachers Network Forum*. Invited presentation to University of Newcastle First Year Teachers Network, 26 October 2007. Newcastle, University of Newcastle. (9)

November 2007:

- *Teaching for Active Learning in Law: Current Challenges*. Keynote presentation for UWS Law School Teaching and Learning Forum, 7 November 2007. Sydney, University of Western Sydney. (25)

### Fellowship Presentations

November 2007:

- University of Technology Sydney, NSW, 13-16 November 2007
  - *Graduate Attributes and the First Year Experience*. Keynote presentation at UTS Teaching and Learning Forum, 14-15 November 2007. Sydney, University of Technology Sydney. (100) [See presentation ppts]
  - *Embedding Graduate Attributes* into individual subjects for Subject Coordinators. Facilitated working sessions with UTS Law School staff, 13 and 16 November 2007. Sydney, University of Technology Sydney. (16) and (15)
- *The First Year Experience of Medical Students: Articulating a Transition Pedagogy*. Invited presentation to UQ Medical School, 21 November 2007. Brisbane, University of Queensland. (30)
- (With ET@QUT Project Team of Dr Karen Nelson, Tracy Creagh, Carole Quinn and Dr Margot Duncan) *Developing Team Work Assessment: Satisfying Solutions for the Real World*. Presentation. In *ATN Evaluation and Assessment Conference*, 29-30 November 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (60) [See abstract.]

December 2007:

- *What we want [and what we can do]: Assessment*. Invited presentation to ANU College of Law Teaching Day: Mini-Retreat 2007, 4 December 2007. Canberra, Brassey Hotel. (40)



- *National Creativity Showcase*. Session Chair (1 of 4). Invited participation in Professor Erica McWilliams's Carrick Associate Fellowship, 7 December 2007. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (70)
- *Legal Education Day 2007: Closing Remarks*. Invited presentation to Legal Education Day, 10 December 2007. Brisbane, Griffith University. (50)

January 2008:

- *Curriculum Design Challenges for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Legal Education*. Keynote presentation. In *UKCLE Learning in the Law Annual Conference (LILAC) 2008, (Dis)integration – designs on the law curriculum*, 2-4 January 2008. Coventry, UK, University of Warwick. (125) [[See UKCLE website.](#)]
- *The First Year Experience and Student Transition*. Invited presentations to JCU Graduate Certificate in Higher Education students (and interested University others), 29 January 2008 and 4 February 2008. By video conference to Cairns (29/1/08), including group from Brisbane campus and Townsville (4/2/08), James Cook University. (50 each session)

February 2008:

- Facilitator, Plenary Panel discussion on *Current issues and future needs (Part 2)* at Australian ePortfolio Symposium 2008, 7-8 February 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (200) [[See videostreamed panel discussion.](#)]
- Participant in Panel Discussion on *An FYE Perspective on ePortfolio Use* at QUT ePortfolio Showcase, 11 February 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (50)
- University of Southern Queensland, 12 February 2008
  - *Curriculum mapping and assessment: starting with the first year*. Invited presentation to USQ Law School Workshop, 12 February 2008. Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland. (20)
  - *Integrating first year assessment*. Workshop discussion with USQ Law School, 12 February 2008. Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland. (20)
- *Integrating the Knowing, the Doing and the Practise: An Early Australian Case Study of Curriculum Renewal*. Invited presentation to *International Conference on the Future of Legal Education*, 20-24 February 2008. Atlanta, USA, Georgia State University. (200)
- Alverno College, USA, 25-28 February 2008
  - *Harnessing Ability-Based Education to Enhance the First Year Experience*. Invited presentation. Wisconsin, USA, Alverno College. (20)
  - *Higher Education and the First Year Experience: An Australian Perspective*. Invited presentation. Wisconsin, USA, Alverno College. (20)

April 2008:

- *The International Student Experience*. Presentation (with others) at QUT International Students Forum, 18 April 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (40)



## June 2008:

- RMIT, Senior Carrick Fellow in-residence at RMIT, 2-6 June 2008
  - *Championing sustainable change for an enhanced student experience: enacting a while-of-institution approach for the first year.* Formal presentation for RMIT, 2 June 2008. Melbourne, State Library. (55) [Listen to audio recording at <http://mams.rmit.edu.au/2wzbrm3pkaqcz.mp3>]
  - *Using student feedback to improve the first year experience.* Round Table presentation to Action Research Teams for RMIT's Carrick Project, 3 June 2008. Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. (8)
  - *The First Year Experience: Leveraging Support & Service Areas.* Round Table presentation to RMIT Students Portfolio, Educational Technology Advisory Group, Executive Director ITS, 3 June 2008. Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. (25)
  - *Discussion with a team leading change in first year in the Business Portfolio.* Discussion Group presentation to RMIT Business Portfolio, 4 June 2008. Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. (15)
  - *Discussion with transition team in Student Services.* Discussion Group presentation to RMIT Student Services, 4 June 2008. Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. (20)
  - *First year curriculum design; articulating a transition pedagogy.* Round Table presentation for Deans (Academic Development), Learning & Teaching Directors in Schools, Program Managers, 4 June 2008. Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. (12)
  - *The First Year Experience: Challenges and Opportunities for Heads of School.* Round Table presentation for Leadership Group, including all Heads of School, 5 June 2008. Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. (3)
  - *Carrick Awards and reflections on experiences as a Carrick Senior Fellow.* Round Table presentation for Learning & Teaching Scholarship series and Community of Scholars focussed on learning & teaching development, 5 June 2008. Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. (20)
- Deakin University, 18-19 June 2008
  - *A transition pedagogy to enhance the first year experience: What factors influence quality learning engagement in the first year?* Keynote presentation. In *Deakin University Teaching and Learning Conference*, 18 June 2008. Melbourne, Deakin University. (200)
  - Panel discussion on Deakin's New Teaching and Learning Plan at *Deakin University Teaching and Learning Conference*, 19 June 2008. Melbourne, Deakin University. (200)
  - Roundtable discussion on Keynote Address at *Deakin University Teaching and Learning Conference*, 19 June 2008. Melbourne, Deakin University. (40)

## July 2008

- *First Year Experience in Higher Education (FYHE) Conference 2008:* Hobart, 30 June-2 July 2008
  - *The next, great, first year challenge: Sustaining, coordinating and embedding coherent institution-wide approaches to enact the FYE as "everybody's business".* Keynote presentation. In 11<sup>th</sup> Pacific Rim First Year Experience in Higher Education (FYHE) Conference 2008, 30 June – 2 July



- 2008. Hobart, Hotel Grand Chancellor. (190) [[See presentation ppts.](#)]
- *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy: What might good first year curriculum design look like?* FYHE 2008 Conference Workshop presentation, 30 June – 2 July 2008. Hobart, Hotel Grand Chancellor. (40)
- (With Assoc Prof Karen Nelson and Adjunct Prof John Clarke) *Expectations and realities for first year students at an Australian university*. Refereed paper at FYHE 2008, 30 June – 2 July 2008. Hobart, Hotel Grand Chancellor. (50)
- (With Dr Ian Wells and Ms Rachael Field) *FYE2: Recognising and Acting on the Synergies Between the First and Final Year Experiences in Legal Education*. Refereed paper at FYHE 2008, 30 June – 2 July 2008. Hobart, Hotel Grand Chancellor. (25)
- *Australasian Law Teachers Association (ALTA) Conference 2008*: James Cook University, 6-9 July 2008
  - *Curriculum Design for quality learning engagement in Law, starting with the first year*. Keynote presentation. In *2008 Australasian Law Teachers Association (ALTA) Conference*, 6-9 July 2008. Cairns, James Cook University. (250)
  - *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy for Legal Education: What might good first year curriculum design in law look like?* Presentation. In *2008 ALTA Conference*, Legal Education Stream, 6-9 July 2008. Cairns, James Cook University. (40)
  - (with Dr Ian Wells and Rachael Field) *A Proposal for Curriculum Renewal in the Final Year of Legal Education: Drawing on Synergies with the First Year Experience for a FYE2*. Presentation. In *2008 ALTA Conference*, Legal Education Stream, 6-9 July 2008. Cairns, James Cook University. (30)
  - Assisted with facilitation of ALTC DBI Session on assessment: *'Re-Imagining the Law' Graduate Attributes* at 2008 ALTA Conference, 6-9 July 2008. Cairns, James Cook University. (60)
- *Curriculum design for quality learning engagement in law*. Invited presentation to QUT Law School Law Planning Day, 16 July 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (50)

#### August 2008:

- *Occasional address*. Invited address at Brisbane ALTC 2008 Citations Ceremony, 4 August 2008. Brisbane, Customs House. (150)
- *Building staff and institutional engagement in ALTC programs and opportunities some personal reflections*. Invited presentation for Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development's (CADAD's) Promoting Excellence Initiative Forum (Qld, NT and Nthn NSW), 27 August 2008. Kelvin Grove, QUT. (23)

#### September 2008:

- *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy: What might good first year curriculum design look like?* Invited presentation and workshop for University of Melbourne CSHE Occasional Research and Policy Seminars Series, 3 September 2008. Melbourne, University of Melbourne. (60)
- *ALTC Fellowship Roundtable with the Victorian FYE Network*. Roundtable presentation, 4 September 2008. Melbourne, Monash University Caulfield Campus. (40)



- *RMIT SET Portfolio: Transition and Peer Mentoring*. Roundtable presentation, 5 September 2008. Melbourne, RMIT. (15) [[See presentation ppts.](#)]
- *Attending to the very foundations: A FYE perspective for staff development that articulates a transition pedagogy*. Plenary facilitated discussion. In *Foundations Colloquium 2008 - Enhancing Quality*, 29-30 September 2008. Townsville, Rydges Southbank Hotel and Convention Centre. (60)

October 2008:

- University of Southern Queensland, 7-8 October 2008
  - *The First Year Student Experience: From Theory to Practice through Policy*. Public lecture, 7 October 2008. Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland. (55) [[See lecture video and ppts.](#)]
  - *Articulating a transition pedagogy: What might good first year curriculum design for distance students look like?* Workshop presentation, 7 October 2008. Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland. (20)
  - *First Year Curriculum*. Web interview with Assoc Prof Janet Taylor for USQ series, 8 October 2008. Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland. [[See the interview.](#)]
  - *ALTC Fellowships: Reflections of a Senior Fellow*. Seminar presentation, 8 October 2008. Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland. (20)
- *“Welcome to UNI101”: Engaging and Supporting First Year Students*. Presentation for QUT ALTC Fellowships Seminar series, 14 October 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (98)
- University of Tasmania, 20 October 2008.
  - *The First Year Student Experience: A transition pedagogy for a mass sector*. Keynote presentation. In *UTAS 2008 First Year Teaching Forum*, 20 October 2008. Launceston, University of Tasmania. (85)
  - Q&A Panel at UTas 2008 First Year Teaching Forum, 20 October 2008. Launceston, University of Tasmania. (85)
- Effective Teaching and Learning Conference 2008, 30-31 October 2008
  - *Mediating Successful Transitions In – Moving from Theory to Practice*. Keynote presentation. In *Effective Teaching and Learning Conference 2008*, 30 October 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (154) [[See presentation ppts](#)]
  - (With Dr Ian Wells and Rachael Field) *Enhancing Transitions Out for Law Students: Curriculum Renewal for a Final Year Experience (FYE2)*. Presentation. In *Effective Teaching and Learning Conference 2008*, 30 October 2008. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (35)
- *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. Invited presentation to QUT Faculty of Education, School of Cultural and Language Studies in Education, Retreat, 31 October 2008. Gold Coast. (35)

November 2008:

- *Harnessing Assessment to Support First Year Learning in Law*. Invited presentation to Griffith University Law School, 5 November 2008. Nathan, Griffith University. (15)
- *Recruiting for retention: What role can recruitment play in managing student expectations?* Keynote presentation. In *National Association of Prospective*



*Student Advisers (NAPSA) Conference*, 14 November 2008. Sunshine Coast, Novotel Twin Waters Resort. (150) [[See ppts.](#)]

- *From Theory to Practice on the First Year Student Experience: A Student Transition Framework and Pedagogy*. Keynote presentation. In *Monash Transition Roundtable 2008*, 25 November 2008. Melbourne, Monash University Clayton Campus. (238)

December 2008:

- *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy: The First Year Experience and Curriculum Design*. Keynote presentation. In *WA ALTC Senior Fellowship Forum on the First Year Experience and Curriculum Design*, 2 December 2008. Perth, Edith Cowan University. (103)
- University of Western Australia, 3 December 2008.
  - *Welcome to UNI101: Engaging and Supporting First Year Students*. Workshop presentation. UWA Distinguished Visiting Teacher, 3 December 2008. Perth, University of Western Australia. (40)
  - *Enhancing the First Year Experience: Student Services and Support*. Invited presentation to Student Services, 3 December 2008. Perth, University of Western Australia. (25)
- *Mapping law curriculum for quality learning engagement*. Invited presentation to Macquarie University Law School Retreat, 10-11 December 2008. Sydney, Newport Mirage. (30)
- *Enhancing Student Success: Closing Address*. Keynote presentation. In *2008 Enhancing Student Success Conference – ‘Working Collaboratively with Students in a Diverse University Environment’*, 12 December 2008. Ourimbah, NSW, University of Newcastle Central Coast Campus. (100)
- Kift, S., Field, R., & Wells, I. (2008) *Promoting Sustainable Professional Futures for Law Graduates through Curriculum Renewal in Legal Education: A Final Year Experience (FYE2)* 15(2) *eLaw Journal* 145-158

January 2009:

- Kift, S. (2008) *21<sup>st</sup> Climate for Change: Curriculum Design For Quality Learning Engagement In Law*. *Legal Education Review*, 18(1-2), 1-30. (Publication out of ALTC sponsored keynote at ALTA 2008)

February 2009:

- *A transition pedagogy for first year curriculum design and renewal*. Keynote presentation. In *FYE Curriculum Design Symposium 2009*, 5-6 February 2009. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. [[See website including FYECD 2009 Symposium – The Movie.](#)] (400)
- ePortfolio Symposium 2009, 9-10 February 2009
  - *Harnessing ePortfolio to support and enhance the first year student experience*. Invited presentation at Australian ePortfolio Symposium 2009, 9 February 2009. Queensland University of Technology (200)
  - (with Alan McAlpine) *Career Modules at QUT*. Launch of Modules at Australian ePortfolio Symposium 2009, 9 February 2009.
- National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) Launch and Forum, University of South Australia, 25-26 February 2009



- *Designing first year learning environments to support student equity and retention*. Invited presentation for National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) Launch and Forum, 25 February 2009. Adelaide, University of South Australia. (40)
- *Chair Session and Closing Plenary Panel*, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) Launch and Forum, 25-26 February 2009. Adelaide, University of South Australia. (70)

#### March 2009:

- *Writing to Promotion Criteria*. Workshop for QUT academic staff seeking promotion to Levels C, D and E, 9 March 2009. Kelvin Grove, Queensland University of Technology. (20)
- *Writing to Promotion Criteria*. Workshop for QUT academic staff seeking promotion to Levels C, D and E, 12 March 2009. Gardens Point, Queensland University of Technology. (30)
- Professor David Boud's ALTC Senior Fellowship, *Changing assessment to focus on learning – implications for universities: An invited forum for opinion-leaders*. Collaborator contribution to two discussion panels: (1) *What constitutes good practice in this area? How can we promote it?* (2) *Worthwhile institutional strategies for reforming assessment*. 13 March 2009. Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology. (50)
- Swinburne University of Technology, 24 March 2009
  - *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy: The First Year Experience and Curriculum Design*. Invited presentation to Swinburne Professional Learning PD, 24 March 2009. Melbourne, Swinburne University of Technology. (50)
  - *Welcome to UNI101: Engaging and Supporting First Year Students*. Invited workshop for Swinburne Professional Learning PD, 24 March 2009. Melbourne, Swinburne University of Technology. (30)

#### April 2009:

- University of Technology Sydney, 2-3 April 2009
  - *A transition pedagogy for first year curriculum design and renewal*. Invited presentation, 2-3 April 2009. Sydney, University of Technology Sydney. (40)
  - *Enhancing the First Year Experience: An Institutional Approach*. Invited presentation to UTS First Year Steering Committee, 2-3 April 2009. Sydney, University of Technology Sydney. (20)
- *Launch of the NCSEHE: Inclusive curriculum to support student equity and retention*. Invited presentation to UQ Equity Roundtable, 23 April 2009. Brisbane, University of Queensland. (25)

#### May 2009:

- *Role of ePortfolio in enhancing the FYE and developing graduate attributes*. Invited presentation, 12 May 2009. Groningen, The Netherlands, University of Groningen. [Recording available from website in two parts: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).] (25)
- *Fourth European Conference on the First Year Experience (EFYE 2009)*, University of Groningen, 13-15 May 2009



- *Moving from theory to action on the first year: A research-based transition pedagogy*. Keynote presentation. In *Fourth European Conference on the First Year Experience (EFYE 2009)*, 13-15 May 2009. Groningen, The Netherlands, University of Groningen. (200)
- (With Bill Johnston, University of Strathclyde) *From sector-wide policy to institutional enactment: Learnings from Scotland and Australia for first year engagement, empowerment and enhancement*. Presentation. In *EFYE 2009*, 13-15 May 2009. Groningen, The Netherlands, University of Groningen. (30)
- (With Assoc Prof Karen Nelson and Adjunct Prof John Clarke, QUT) *A holistic approach to the identification and support and engagement of first year students: a retention strategy*. Presentation. In *EFYE 2009*, 13-15 May 2009. Groningen, The Netherlands, University of Groningen. (20)
- *Enhancing the First Year Student Experience: A transition pedagogy for first year curriculum design and renewal*. Invited presentation to Scottish Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), 20 May 2009. Glasgow, Scotland, Scottish QAA. (6)
- *Enhancing the First Year Student Experience: A transition pedagogy for first year curriculum design and renewal*. Invited presentation, 21-22 May 2009. Oxford, UK, Oxford Brookes University. (50)

#### July 2009:

- (With Rachael Field) *Intentional First Year Curriculum Design as a Means of Facilitating Student Engagement: Some Exemplars*. Refereed paper. In 12<sup>th</sup> Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education (FYHE) Conference 2009, 29 June – 2 July 2009. Townsville, Rydges Southbank. (50)
- Australasian Law Teachers Association Conference 2009 (ALTA 2009) Pre-Conference Teaching Workshop, 5 July 2009 (ALTC sponsored).
  - Participation on initial plenary panel. (35)
  - Presentation of two parallel sessions
    - The First Year Experience (10)
    - ALTC Opportunities (20)

*Optimal First Year Curriculum Design in Law: Articulating a Transition Pedagogy*  
Presentation. In *ALTA 2009*, 5-7 July 2009. Sydney, UWS. (25)
- *Sustaining, coordinating and embedding coherent approaches to support the FYE*. Invited presentation to and workshop facilitation for College of Health and Science *First Year Experience Planning Workshop* University of Western Sydney, 17 July 2009. Sydney, UWS. (50)

#### Forthcoming 2009/2010:

- La Trobe University, 25-27 August, 2009.
  - *Enhancing the first-year learning experience: The latest research and best practice*. Invited presentation to Faculty of Education (hosted by The Centre for Excellence in Outdoor and Environmental Education), 25 August, 2009. Bendigo, La Trobe University.
  - *CEOEE and the First Year Student Experience*. First Year Experience Workshop for Centre for Excellence in Outdoor Environmental Education, 26 August, 2009. Bendigo, La Trobe University.
- *Student Engagement*. Invited presentation to Deakin University Academic Board, 8 September 2009. Melbourne, Deakin University.





- *Assessment Futures*. Invited participation in Professor David Boud's ALTC Senior Fellowship Final Event (collaborator contribution), 9-11 September 2009. Sydney, UTS.
- *Effective strategies for the engagement and retention of first year students*. Queensland Student Equity Symposium Panel Member presentation. *Getting them in and keeping them in: Access and retention for students from Low SES backgrounds*, 20 October, 2009. Emmanuel College, University of Queensland.
- *ALTC Senior Fellowship: A Transition Pedagogy*. Invited presentation to ALTC Fellowship Forum. 21-23 October 2009. Brisbane.
- Southern Cross University, 26 October, 2009
  - *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy: The First Year Experience and Curriculum Design*. Invited presentation to SCU Festival of Teaching Week, 26 October 2009. Lismore, Southern Cross University
  - *Designing First Year Curriculum for Student Engagement, Success and Retention*. Workshop for SCU Festival of Teaching Week, 26 October 2009. Tweed, Southern Cross University
- *Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Symposium*. Invited Keynote and Workshop, 28-30 October, 2009. Wellington, New Zealand.
- *The teaching research nexus and the first year student experience: What are the possibilities?* In Undergraduate Research in Australia: First Australian Summit on the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning. Invited participation in Professor Angela Brew's ALTC National Teaching Fellowship Summit (collaborator contribution), 5-6 November 2009. Sydney, The Swiss Grand Hotel.
- *Students in Transition: Strategies for Success*. Workshop facilitation for Faculty of Business and Law, University of Newcastle, 9 November 2009. Newcastle.
- *Harnessing Assessment and Feedback in the First Year to Support Learning Success, Engagement and Retention*. Refereed paper submitted to ATN Assessment Conference 2009: Assessment in Different Dimensions, 19-20 November 2009. Melbourne, RMIT.
- *Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL) Conference*. Keynote presentation, 26-27 November 2009. University of Queensland.
- *What would a socially inclusive university look like? Keynote panellist for 2009 Equal Opportunity Practitioners in Higher Education Australia (EOPHEA) Conference*, 1-3 December 2009. Randwick, University of New South Wales Kensington Campus.
- *Learning Leadership and Associate/Deputy Deans Education: From rocky outcrops to greener pastures?* In ACT/NSW Associate/Deputy Dean Education Networking Forum: Making Room to Lead, 4 December 2009, University of Canberra (with ANU).
- *The Scholarship of Legal Teaching*. Invited presentation to Bond University Law School. January 2010 (date TBC).
- *Learning with the World's Great University Teachers*. Invited book chapter. (Commissioning Editor: Prof Iain Hay, Flinders University)
- *Practical Experiences in Professional Education (PEPE) Conference 2011*. Keynote presentation, January 2011 (date TBC). Queensland University of Technology.



## Media Recognition

- *Communiqué*, October 2008, p4, 'FYE forum'.
- *Campus Review*, 9 February 2009, '[Keeping them there; why first year matters so much](#)', by Julie Hare.
- *Campus Review*, 23 February 2009, '[Rethinking the first year of university?](#)' (Edited version of Prof Vincent Tinto's keynote speech to the FYE Curriculum Design Symposium at QUT on 5-6 February 2009.)
- *Communiqué*, March 2009, pp 53-54, 'Institutions must do more'.
- *The Australian, Higher Education Supplement*, 4 March 2009, '[Switch that attrition to fruition](#)', by Guy Healy and Andrew Trounson.
- *HERDSA News* 31(1), April 2009, pp 1-4, Invited article, *A Transition Pedagogy: The First Year Experience Curriculum Design Symposium*, by Sally Kift.
- *Education Review, May 2009*, pp 10-11, 'Stepping Up', by Judy Adamson.
- *Campus Review*, 7 July 2009, 'Even law students need learner support'



## Appendix 3: Fellowship Collaborators

### ALTC Senior Fellowship: Articulating a transition pedagogy

#### Case Study Collaborators

Case Study Collaborator	Affiliation	Discipline Area
Associate Professor E. Jane Fee & *Dr Janet McCracken	Simon Fraser University, Canada	Applied Sciences ('TechOne')
Associate Professor Dawn Gleeson	The University of Melbourne	Science (Biology)
*Associate Professor Annah Healy	Queensland University of Technology	Education
*Dr Jennifer Marchbank & Associate Professor E. Jane Fee	Simon Fraser University, Canada	Arts & Social Sciences ('Explorations')
Associate Professor Karen Nelson	Queensland University of Technology	Information Technology
^Professor Jennifer Radbourne & *Dr Karen LeRossignol	Deakin University	Creative Arts ('Bilby')
Ms Lisa Westcott	James Cook University	Law

### ALTC Senior Fellowship: Articulating a transition pedagogy

#### Expert Commentary Collaborators

Expert Commentary Collaborator (and affiliation)	Commentary Area/ Perspective
<b>Ms Alison Bone</b> Principal Lecturer, Brighton Business School, Higher Education Academy Accreditor, University of Brighton, UK.	Formative and summative assessment for transition in first year curriculum design.
<b>Mrs Catherine Campbell</b> Sessional Academic, Law School, Queensland University of Technology.	Sessional/part time teacher perspective on the first year experience and curriculum.
<b>*Dr Wayne Clark</b> Director, Student Administration, University of Auckland.	Peer-to-peer interactions – the harnessing of social and academic interactions between peers in aid of the first year experience and curriculum.
<b>Mr Colin McCowan, OAM</b> Manager, Careers & Employment Service, Queensland University of Technology.	Student ePortfolio and careers perspective in first year curriculum design.
<b>Ms Rachael Field</b> Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Queensland University of Technology.	Engaging pedagogies for involving first year students in their new learning.
<b>Mr Bill Johnston</b> Senior Lecturer & Assistant Director (Student Learning Enhancement), Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement, University of Strathclyde, Scotland.	Institutional philosophy, strategy, action planning, culture change, physical space and resource allocation as impacting on the first year experience of curriculum.
<b>^Professor Kerri-Lee Krause</b> Director of GIHE, Griffith University. (previously The University of Melbourne)	Demographics of first year students and ramifications of the changing patterns of student engagement.



Expert Commentary Collaborator (and affiliation)	Commentary Area/ Perspective
<b>Ms Jennifer Leske</b> Transition Coordinator, Transition Office, Flinders University.	Student orientation and transition into tertiary learning perspective.
<b>Dr Stuart Levy</b> Coordinator of the Diploma of Foundation Studies Program, School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences, Monash University.	Accommodating student diversity in first year curriculum design.
<b>Associate Professor Alf Lizzio</b> School of Psychology, Griffith University.	Enabling student efficacy through first year curriculum design.
<b>#Ms Rikki Mawad</b> President Tasmania University Union, University of Tasmania.	Student perspective on first year curriculum design.
<b>^Professor Noel Meyers</b> (with Prof Yoni Ryan) Senior Learning and Teaching Coach, Faculty of Business, University of Tasmania. (now University of the Sunshine Coast)	Staff development and coaching academic staff in aid of a transition pedagogy.
<b>**Dr Amanda Pearce</b> Associate Director, Portfolio Language and Learning, Victoria University, Australia.	Multiple entry points into the first year of tertiary learning.
<b>*Bruce Moulton</b> Head of Combined Degrees Program Faculty of Engineering University of Technology Sydney.	Double degree perspective.
<b>^Professor Yoni Ryan</b> Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning Australian Catholic University. (previously University of Canberra)	Harnessing of technological affordances to enhance the seamlessness of in- and out-of-class experiences for 'seamless connectedness'.
<b>Dr Judy Skene</b> Co-ordinator, Transition Support Program, Co-ordinator Student Diversity Access Program, The University of Western Australia.	Student support services perspective on the first year experience as it impacts on first year curriculum design.
<b>* ^Professor Janet Taylor</b> Learning and Teaching Support Unit (LTSU) University of Southern Queensland (now Southern Cross University)	Enabling academic skills through the first year curriculum.

\* New collaborator

\*\* Substituted collaborator

# Student collaborator identified

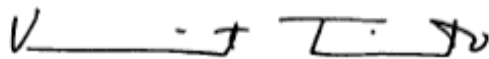
^ Changed institutional affiliation



## Appendix 4: Professor Vincent Tinto evaluation

Although the higher education systems in the United States and Australia are different in structure and operate in different cultural and policy contexts, I am struck by the similarity in the underlying principles that govern the way we seek to improve student success during the critical first year of university study; principles that have been borne out by years of research on effective practice for student success. In different ways, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), like universities in the United States that have been successful in enhancing student success, seeks to connect its efforts to support student success to the curriculum in timely and contextualised ways that bring together the work of academics and professional staff. In doing it recognizes that enhancing student success requires it to move beyond the tendency to adopt add-on initiatives that leave unchanged the prevailing character of first year student experience and develop instead a coherent, systematic structure that changes that experience in ways that does not leave student success to chance.

In this regard, I am impressed by the work of Sally Kift and Karen Nelson under the ALTC Fellowship and at QUT that enacts these underlying principles and has resulted in enhanced success for first year students. In particular, Sally and Karen have developed a transition pedagogy that focuses on intentional first year curriculum design as the theoretical foundation for enhancing the learning, retention and success of first year students. The theoretical foundation and the institutional framework that arises from it, offers a context-sensitive approach that can be apply to many other national settings.



Vincent Tinto  
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