



Australian Learning & Teaching Council: Associate Fellowship

Sustainable and Evidence-based Learning and Teaching Approaches to the Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The discipline and profession of psychology in Australia is currently under pressure to change from both internal and external forces (Littlefield et al., 2007). This Fellowship project intentionally responded to two of these influences. First, internationally, there is the push toward accountability in the tertiary education sector, and this is partly being operationalised at the learning and teaching coal-face through the delineation and assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs; Dunn et al., 2007). A primary outcome of the current project was the delineation of a set of national graduate attributes (GAs) for the four-year undergraduate degree in psychology. Second, also on the theme of accountability, there is a need for improved learning and teaching strategies that facilitate students' attainment of these learning outcomes. Psychology, with its ever-increasing knowledge base on the nature of learning, memory, motivation and social influence, should be at the forefront of application of this knowledge to university student learning and performance. A second outcome of this project was to facilitate Australian Psychology's contribution to this field through the strengthening of the activities and outputs of the Australian Psychology Educators Network (APEN).

Graduate Attributes for Psychology: Through a process of broad and iterative consultation with key stakeholders, a significant outcome of this project has been the development of an agreed set of GAs for psychology. This process was facilitated by my appointment to the APS Program Development Advisory Committee, where I obtained an appreciation of both the processes and challenges of accreditation, and the diversity of program offerings at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. As a result of submissions made by myself and the Advisory Committee, the attributes have now been incorporated into the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council's (APAC) *Rules and Standards* (APAC, 2008; <http://www.apac.psychology.org.au/>). This step legitimizes attempts by Departments and Schools of Psychology to integrate development and assessment of these GAs in their curriculum structures. Resources to support academics wishing to embed GAs in their programs is being made available through the ALTC Exchange. Moreover, a sustainable system of quality screening and review of those ALTC resources is being put in place. The specification of a developmental rubric and benchmarks is the next step in my post-project activities.

Strengthening of the Community of Practice and Promotion of Evidence-Based Teaching in Psychology: Through this Fellowship, APEN (established by Lipp et al., 2007) was formally recognized by the APS through its incorporation as the Teaching Learning and Psychology Interest Group (TLaPIG, www.psychology.org.au/tlpiig). This step provides a mechanism for continued and sustainable discussion

regarding curriculum design, and the promotion of teaching and learning within the discipline. The Advisory Committee members and myself promoted and disseminated information regarding evidence-based teaching through a wide variety of forums. Through the Fellowship, APEN sponsored a number of workshops and meetings in which internationally recognized scholars in psychology teaching and learning were able to present a case for evidence-based procedures. Advisory Committee members who hold positions on relevant committees of the APS and other organizations, and myself, have been able to disseminate information regarding the Fellowship and its goals. The APEN/TLPIG website (www.psychology.org.au/tlpi), and activities planned for future meetings of the APS and other conferences, will provide further opportunities for the sharing of best practices and problem solving around evidence-based teaching. Moreover, I will co-chain the 4th International Conference on Psychology Education (ICOPE) in Sydney in 2010, where education leaders will be discussing internationalization of the psychology curriculum.

A Vision for Undergraduate Education in Psychology: An unanticipated development in the final stages of the Fellowship was the articulation of a vision regarding the legacy of an undergraduate education in psychology. If adopted by educators, the intentional and extended development of *psychological literacy* will constitute a paradigm shift in psychology as a discipline and a profession.

Simultaneous with the Fellowship was the ALTC Psychology Discipline Initiative, the aims of which were to (a) support the activities of this Fellowship, (b) create a vision for psychology in Australia, and (c) make a strong contribution to the review of models of education and training in psychology. The outcomes of the latter two aims strongly influenced this Fellowship's "Vision for Undergraduate Education in Psychology", just as this Fellowship's delineation of GAs influenced the outcomes of those two aims (see <http://www.altc.edu.au/carrick/go/home/pid/343>, *Designing a diverse, future-oriented vision*).

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