

Australian Business Deans Council

Teaching and Learning Network

Office for Learning and Teaching
Networks

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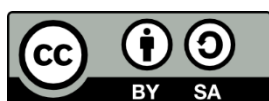
Winthrop Professor Phil Hancock

<www.abdc.edu.au/pages/teaching-and-learning-network.html>

<www.abdc.edu.au/pages/learning-standards.html>

<<http://achievementmatters.com.au>>

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Requests and inquiries concerning these rights should be addressed to:
Office for Learning and Teaching
Department of Education

GPO Box 9880,
Location code N255EL10
Sydney NSW 2001

[<learningandteaching@education.gov.au>](mailto:learningandteaching@education.gov.au)

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Network summary

Objectives of the network

1. To develop threshold learning outcomes in other business disciplines beyond accounting
2. To fund distinguished international visiting scholars
3. To replicate the successful workshops for Achievement Matters for accounting to other disciplines as the learning standards are developed
4. To support costs for invited presenters to attend the semi-annual Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) network meetings

Outcomes and deliverables¹

To develop threshold learning outcomes in other business disciplines beyond accounting

Accounting is the first discipline that sought to collaboratively develop and implement a national model of expert peer review for benchmarking learning outcomes against nationally-agreed thresholds, developed under the national Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project (2010). The ABDC selected Marketing as the second discipline in Business for the development of threshold learning standards. These were developed over 2011-12 and published in September 2012. Learning standards for Economics were developed over 2012-13 and published in December 2013. Learning standards are currently being developed for Finance and also for Tourism, Hospitality and Events. More details are available at <www.abdc.edu.au/pages/learning-standards.html>.²

To fund distinguished international visiting scholars

In 2011, we hosted a series of state-based workshops by Jude Carroll from Oxford-Brookes University. Professor Larry Michaelsen from the University of Central Missouri delivered workshops in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney in November 2012 on team-based learning. Berry O'Donovan from Oxford-Brookes University is delivering a series of state-based workshops in July 2014. Details are available at: <www.abdc.edu.au/pages/teaching-and-learning-network-updates.html>.

To replicate the successful workshops for Achievement Matters for accounting to other disciplines as the learning standards are developed

The Achievement Matters: External peer review of accounting learning standards has held

¹ Further information on outcomes is provided on page 4.

² Specific project websites available at <www.economiclearningstandards.com/>, <www.finance-learning-standards.com/> and <<https://sites.google.com/site/tourismandhospitalitystandard/>>

six workshops in a number of locations in Australia since July 2011. More details are available at <<http://achievementmatters.com.au/>>. Seed funds have been allocated to the Marketing working party to implement a similar process to achievement matters.

To support costs for invited presenters to attend the semi-annual ABDC network meetings

There have been four very successful meetings of the ABDC learning and teaching network during the period of the networks project. Details are available from the Executive Officer of the ABDC at <office@abdc.edu.au>.

To develop and maintain the ABDC L&T web site in the absence of the ALTC web site

The website was substantially revised and published in early 2014. See <www.abdc.edu.au/pages/teaching-and-learning-network.html>

To provide administrative support to the ABDC L&T network Executive

The funds have enabled the executive to access administrative support to conduct the network activities in an efficient manner.

Contribution to learning and teaching

The network has contributed the following to teaching and learning across the discipline, institution and national levels.

Discipline level

At the discipline level the network has had a range of impacts through:

- Close involvement in supporting and assisting the development of learning standards in various business disciplines, including marketing, economics, finance, and, tourism, hospitality and events.
- Close involvement with the assessment of the learning standards through its support of *Achievement Matters: external review of accounting learning standards*. It is also providing support for assessment of the marketing learning standards.

Institution, state and national levels

At the institution, state and national levels the network has had a range of impacts through:

- Implementation of many initiatives like PASS and the use of tools like SPARK^{PLUS} (Self and Peer Assessment Resource Kit)
- Adoption of team based learning at many institutions as a result of visits by Professor Larry Michaelsen
- The outcomes of a number of ALTC/OLT funded projects which the network has been closely involved with including
 - Embedding the Development & Grading of Generic Skills in the Business Curriculum <<http://graduateskills.edu.au/project/>>
 - Embedding professionally relevant learning in the business curriculum through industry engagement <www.olt.gov.au/project-engaging-industry-embedding-vu-2008>
 - Beyond numbers: valuing quality teaching in business education <www.olt.gov.au/project-beyond-numbers-valuing-quality-csu-2008>
 - Accounting for the future: more than numbers <www.olt.gov.au/resource-accounting-future-more-uwa-2009>
- Dissemination of outcomes of other ALTC/OLT funded projects and fellowships at network meetings including
 - Capstone Courses in Undergraduate Business Degrees: Better Course Design, Better Learning Activities, Better Assessment <<http://businesscapstones.edu.au/>>
 - Peer assisted teaching scheme (<http://monash.edu/pats>)
 - Communities of practice <www.olt.gov.au/altc-teaching-fellow-jacquie-mcdonald>

- ABDC scholar (Associate Professor Mark Freeman) activities have been supported only in regard to travel to four dean's meetings to help execute the network's priorities. While paid by the ABDC, Associate Professor Mark Freeman has supported the network's promotion of the ABDC' systematic approach to setting, implementing and assessing academic standards. He has also been part of the network executive and supported its other learning and teaching priorities including establishing state chapters of the network to support learning and teaching change (beginning with NSW and then extending to Victoria), professional development and liaison with professional bodies.

Factors contributing to productive networking

Achievements of the network

While not funded by the networks project the ABDC learning and teaching network has proven to be a very strategic and effective group since its inception in 2004. The network has received directly around \$355,000 in funds from the ALTC and now the OLT from projects initiated by associate dean members. In addition this project has been indirectly involved with funding of around \$743,000 across four projects. Each of these projects has had their own (documented) impacts. Specific achievements from the networks project are:

- Close involvement with the development of the learning standards for Accounting, Marketing and Economics. Learning standards for Finance are also well advanced. Plans for development of learning standards for other business disciplines are in place (i.e. Tourism, Hospitality and Events) demonstrating a systematic and cost-effective approach to this important outcome.
- Since the inception of the network it has supported five visits from distinguished international experts in learning and teaching. Each has conducted workshops across three to five mainland states thus allowing many staff from a range of universities and disciplines to benefit from such visits. Several other disciplines beyond business are now well engaged with team-based learning as a result of the network's sponsorship of Professor Larry Michaelsen's visit.
- Regular six monthly national meetings have facilitated the sharing of good practice across the network with many members implementing initiatives based on the learning from the network meetings. Starting first in NSW and then Victoria, meetings of state chapters have and are extending this reach and sharing of good practice (e.g. PASS, academic honesty, capstones and academic standards).
- The visits by international visitors have had a positive impact on academic staff in Business and other disciplines. Professor Larry Michaelsen has been on three visits given the significant impact he has had on teaching through his Team Based Learning (see www.teambasedlearning.org/).
- Strategic guidance to deans on important learning and teaching matters. Both the network Chair and the ABDC Scholar have been able to attend all deans meetings and report Network developments, provide advice and source key speakers. The network has drafted multiple ABDC submissions to peak bodies including the Australian Qualifications Council, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP). This strategic advice has helped to place business higher education in a more responsive and advanced position than it otherwise would be. Invitations to engage with other deans councils have been forthcoming (e.g. Science, ICT, and Nursing & Midwifery). Professional bodies are also more engaged.

Development of learning standards for other business disciplines beyond accounting

Marketing learning standards

The process for developing the marketing learning standards began in April 2011 with the expression of interest to participate in a working party. A business dean, who was also a marketing academic and member of the Australian Business Deans Council, had oversight of the project as a deliverable to the deans and chaired the reference group. The ABDC Scholar mentored the working party chair and supported the reference group chair. The learning standards were finally released in September 2012. An accompanying website records the history and process of their development.

Development of the Marketing learning standards was substantially helped by regular teleconferences, sophisticated use of Google Docs (for drafts of standards, flyers and even presentations) and a very capable project officer located with the working party chair. However, development of the Marketing Learning Standards took more time than initially expected. There was an expectation by some that the Marketing discipline would be simpler because it was in the same generic business discipline cluster with Accounting. Given the previous feedback on the generic nature of the Accounting Learning Standards from senior business academics there was also some expectation that the marketing working party could start at a further advanced point, namely the Accounting standards and refine them. This did not occur for various reasons and reinforces the strength of the original approach taken by the leaders advising the ALTC Business, Management and Economics group in February 2010 to select specific disciplines rather than develop a generic set of standards for business. However, the expectation that there could be time saved by duplicating a known process was realised. In large part this was achieved by having the same person mentoring discipline leaders through the process (ie. Associate Professor Mark Freeman, ABDC Scholar).

Another unexpected outcome was the lower level of engagement by the marketing community than by the accounting community. While part of this can be explained by the lower numbers involved in marketing, it was somewhat unexpected given that those involved with marketing are by their professional role better equipped to engage their colleagues than those in Accounting. While the opportunity for engagement between the academy and the profession has been welcomed by some, lack of engagement in the consultation sessions could be due to the lack of clarity around the status of the discipline standards. The release of the TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) Act in January 2012 did provide some useful clarity³, albeit too late as the Marketing Learning Standards had been approved and published. However, as indicated by the number of meetings (ie. 34), the efforts to seek consensus by the working party resulted in a longer gestation phase.

³ "There are robust internal processes for design and approval of the course of study, which take account of external standards and requirements, e.g. published discipline standards, professional accreditation, input from relevant external stakeholders" < www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2012L00003 > .

Some of the reasons that resulted in a different approach include:

- Unlike Accounting, the Marketing higher education community has a larger number of professional associations and none dominate graduate destinations or the typical pathway into the profession.
- While Marketing has been growing in its relative weight in the business school portfolio, it has been undergoing considerable change with new sub-disciplines emerging and this change in identity is still underway.
- The Marketing profession have their own set of core capabilities and some of these differences became apparent during the development process. For example, the social aspect or social responsibility of marketing, and its broad applicability to diverse applications and contexts was highlighted as an important threshold learning outcome over those identified in accounting.

Economics Learning Standards

Development of the Economics Learning Standards was substantially supported by an OLT fellowship to Professor Guest. In many respects the development of standards followed a similar process to Marketing: appointment of a dean, who was an academic economist chairing the reference group and reporting to the ABDC deans; a call for expressions of interest for working party members; regular reporting to deans; state-wide consultations; and an accompanying website documenting process and outcomes.⁴

It took a while to get momentum after the initial fellowship was granted. Several reasons explain this:

- It took some time to agree the appropriate role for the ABDC in supporting the project (and fellowship) and to distinguish its respective role with the professional body, the Economics Society of Australia (ESA). The Economics discipline does not reside in all Australian business schools.
- There was no meeting of the Deans council until August 2012.
- Having an additional collaborating partner, the Economics Society of Australia (ESA), meant more time was needed negotiating approvals. It took longer for the expression of interest wording to be agreed because sign off from multiple partners was needed.

While there was one face-to-face meeting in November 2012, further meeting progress was hampered due to the holiday season and the difficulty getting a quorum.

Reaching consensus was a further challenge (compared to Accounting or Marketing) because

- The working party is larger than either Accounting or Marketing.
- The Economics discipline does have a very diverse set of strongly-held views that need to be unpacked, largely due to its long and deep history as a discipline compared to both accounting and marketing.

⁴ <www.economiclearningstandards.com/>

A two day face to face meeting in February, followed by some teleconferences did help progress. The use of Google Docs and sub-groups charged with drafting initial text supported this progress to some extent too. While the challenge of a large diverse group did slow drafting it did make the first public draft more robust and therefore defensible. Another lesson that has been reiterated with Economics is the merit in developing learning standards simultaneously for bachelor and master degrees. Doing them together reduces the likelihood of bachelor's standards being unnecessarily aspirational with the corresponding challenge of master's standards subsequently being at an unrealistically high level of attainment. Having Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) descriptors at level seven (bachelor) and nine (coursework masters) also helps this distinction.

During drafting, it has been particularly useful to have had clarity around the existence of TEQSA and HESP compared with development of the Accounting or Marketing learning standards. For example, it is now clearer the relative role of the discipline learning standards versus the national legislated Provider Standards and Qualifications Standards. Whenever required attainment levels for bachelor or masters degrees have been discussed, it has been most useful to have the revised AQF on hand to arbitrate discussions. FAQ on both TEQSA and HESP websites have been very useful. The working party has been more easily able to resolve the lack of necessity to develop a set of learning standards for an entry-level master degree as well as advanced masters.

One further learning relates to the access to existing work by both the UK (benchmark statements) as well as that of Tuning and Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO). We are aware that the final statement developed for Economics learning standards will be more scrutinised given the substantial effort and resources placed into the OECD AHELO project both in definition and assessment.

Finance Learning Standards

The development of finance learning standards began in April 2013 with the appointment of an ABDC dean with the relevant specialist academic background to oversee the project, chair the reference group and report to other deans. Following a call for expressions of interest to participate in the working party, eight members were chosen (of 17 applicants) and a chair appointed. Once the first meeting could be scheduled members were provided with pre-reading to optimise the time together. The first face-to-face meeting was in Melbourne on 30 September and was extremely productive. The working party has also developed a timeline for drafts, teleconferences and consultation processes. Once again a website has been developed, leveraging off the economics and marketing websites before that.⁵ Once again members have been tasked to draft sections of the standards document based on initial discussions and Google Docs is being used for drafting and to support teleconferenced discussions to refine the text.

⁵ <www.finance-learning-standards.com/>

Tourism, hospitality and events Learning Standards

In June 2013 an experienced project team received notice of the success of their large OLT grant to develop learning standards for Tourism, Hospitality Management and Events. Although this sub-discipline group is often in business faculties/schools, this is not always the case. For several years the ABDC Scholar has been collaborated with the project team on academic standards and had been supporting them in writing an OLT grant application. The project team is currently gearing up to continue the momentum they had achieved in their previous project. While a dean representative has again been appointed to liaise with the project team and the ABDC Scholar will continue to work with them, it is unlikely that they will need to use the network seeding funding like other business disciplines (marketing, economics, finance) before them.

International visiting scholars

The main challenge flows from the first challenge in that there have been too few serving on the Executive to take on the role of identifying and managing potential visitors. Making the necessary arrangements and dealing with the various logistical issues associated with these visitors does require a time commitment of an (already busy) member of the executive who is already also an associate dean. Fortunately as of October 2013 we have one more member of the Executive and we hope this will make a difference.

Methods of networking which worked particularly well

- Regular six monthly face to face meetings and the sharing of initiatives like Peer Assisted Study Sessions which many members have now implemented. We also have a regular session on hot topics which is always a valuable part of our networking as we share experiences and there is a keen sense of collaboration and cooperation. Regular hot topics include AQF implementation, reinvigorating academics, supporting international students and developing academic literacy. State chapters of the network developing their own collaborative agendas appear to be an emerging benefit, although care has been needed to focus on areas where competition was not an issue.
- International visitors are supported to run workshops in each of the capital cities whenever possible and this has been an effective strategy.
- State-based chapters can be formed once the network (and relationships) has matured so members have a strong sense of the boundaries and culture (eg. Chatham House rules; areas where competition can demand confidentiality rather than cooperation); and where an energetic leader is available to take some initiative. Such state-based chapters can save time and money in travelling and work on shared issues in a trusted environment (eg. the NSW chapter is working on a joint project to develop open educational resources to support threshold learning concepts in Finance).

Methods of networking you would recommend to others

- We would recommend all the above provided there are adequate resources to support the various activities.
- We would recommend an executive be appointed to harness the diverse resources and prioritise energies.

Barriers to productive networking

Challenges experienced by the network

Sustainability

The Associate Dean Learning and Teaching (ADL&T) position has a significant load where the expectations and duties often are not commensurate with adequate funding and recognition resulting in a large turnover. The first challenge arising from this is maintaining an up to date record of associate deans at all universities to enable the right person to be engaged in the network. A bigger challenge relates to the lack of continuity of members and the development of ongoing relationships between ADL&T. The third and most significant challenge for the network sustainability relates to having enough members with sufficient tenure of position to serve on the Executive and provide both strategy and operational input.

Challenges of networking in general

There is no doubt that one of the major challenges for networking in general is the demands on individuals and the time available to get engaged with networking.

Solutions to the challenges experienced

The Executive of the network is meeting with the Deans council executive on July 24 in Melbourne. One of the ideas we plan to discuss is that the deans should consider providing some workload allowance for any associate dean that takes a role on the learning and teaching executive. Time involved working on the network executive is not likely to be rewarded through the promotions process at most universities.

What the network offers

Associate Deans Learning and Teaching are already busy senior faculty/school leaders who have a challenging portfolio, particularly in an environment where research activities are distracting because they are more likely to provide a surer and faster way to promotion than teaching. The network provides a good forum to leverage tacit learnings of what works and what does not. The network provides an opportunity for associate dean members to share practice, resources and creative ideas through networking functions, presentations and interactive sessions. It also facilitates collaborative engagement in projects, including those which can also seek external funding.

There are many examples of the impact of the network's activities on both the curriculum and the design of assessment tasks. Learning standards are reflected in course curriculum maps. Assessment tasks are better designed to provide appropriate evidence of whether an individual student's work meets the relevant learning standards. Team Based Learning is now used at many institutions.

The network meets twice each year in an Australian capital city, where members focus on current issues of importance in the learning and teaching environment. Recent focus topics include academic standards, benchmarking, quality assurance, accreditation, and strategies for encouraging, measuring and rewarding good teaching. Benefits flow the other way also. Local business schools always have an opportunity to showcase good learning and teaching practice, usually around the conference theme. These opportunities can serve an added benefit to the local associate dean because they are an attractive opportunity to recognise deserving innovative academics and professional staff.

It is an important sub-committee for the deans and is charged with the responsibility for drafting responses on behalf of the deans to any relevant learning and teaching publications from bodies like the HESP.