Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education:

Resources to support institutions in developing and embedding effective policies and practices

Final Project Report
December 2008

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The University of Melbourne

Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources
University of Wollongong

The principal outcome from this project is the publication:

*Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education: A handbook to support institutions in developing an embedding effective policies and practices.*

Available at: [http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au)
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2008
Executive summary

Aims and objectives

Peer review of teaching has the potential to advance the quality of learning and teaching in higher education. Peer review capitalises on a currently underutilised resource for teaching evaluation and feedback — the educative expertise and judgement of university teachers in their fields. The potential benefits from the more widespread practice of peer review of teaching include strengthening the teaching culture of institutions, and the direct benefits to individuals in terms of new insights and feedback which is complementary to that provided by students.

Despite its potential, peer review of teaching is currently not commonplace in Australian universities. In part, this reflects the challenges inherent in introducing programs of teaching review or evaluation. That is, how to maximise the benefits of feedback while also supporting more formal evaluation of teaching — and strengthening both through the appropriate institutional policies and guidelines.

This project aimed to encourage and support greater participation in peer review of teaching through the creation of resources to assist institutions to effectively implement policies and programs of peer review of teaching. To this end the project investigated current practices nationally, engaged the higher education community in discussion of the issue, and developed resources appropriate to the Australian context. In particular, the project sought to accommodate the diversity of institutions, local environments, and purposes. The aim was not to prescribe a standard approach to peer review of teaching. Rather, the resources describe the decision points in program design, and the key considerations associated with each.

The project included:

- A national survey of peer review of teaching activities in Australian higher education, with detailed responses received from 26 institutions.
- Significant input into the development of a ‘framework’ for peer review from staff drawn from 11 Australian universities, forming the project’s reference group and invitational ‘expert workshop’. This group included experience and expertise in institutional leadership and the implementation of programs, including programs of peer review.
- The production and distribution of a comprehensive handbook on peer review of teaching, designed to support institutions in the development and embedding of programs of peer review.
- A full-day Colloquium involving 85 participants from 29 universities.

Mapping study

The first stage of the project involved a survey of peer review of teaching activities across Australian universities. This mapping study found that peer review of teaching was not a widespread professional activity in Australian universities, although there were several examples of successful ‘local’ programs (e.g. within departments, or as part of academic development programs). The context in which peer review of teaching was used most frequently was for new staff as part of foundations courses, and sessional staff in tutor training programs. Existing practices were not generally embedded within institutional policies, and successful programs were commonly attributed to the efforts of management-level ‘champions’ and coordinating staff members. The need for support in both policy development and practice emerged from the study.

Handbook

A key outcome from the project is the publication:

ISBN 9780734040459
The handbook is principally designed for leaders of teaching and learning initiatives and provides a framework defining effective peer review of teaching in Australian universities. It presents a set of core principles defining peer review of teaching in the Australian context, while supporting diverse university contexts and approaches. The handbook highlights the key considerations associated with peer review of teaching and the role of policies in effectively embedding peer review into academic cultures. Illustrative case studies and practical guides to program design are provided.

The handbook draws extensively upon insights gained through the mapping study, and upon the contributions of staff from across the sector. In particular, members of the expert workshop and reference group played key roles in shaping the framework and determining the structure and scope of the document. Case studies were also prepared through the generous contributions of staff involved in a range of peer review programs from five universities.

Print copies of the handbook were distributed at the Colloquium (described below), and have been sent to all Australian universities through the DVC(A) or equivalent. The handbook is also available in electronic form from the CSHE website (www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au).

**Colloquium**
The handbook was launched at a national event in November 2008 entitled: *Peer Review of University Teaching: Capitalising on Collegial Expertise and Feedback*. This colloquium discussed the benefits, challenges and decision points for institutions in relation to peer review of teaching. It featured keynote presentations from educational leaders in the promotion of teaching and learning enhancement. In addition, the project teams and various members of the reference group and expert workshop group presented and led discussions around key topics associated with the implementation of peer review of teaching. The colloquium attracted 85 registrants from 29 universities, including staff from institutional management and academic development units, and staff directly involved in university teaching within the disciplines.
1: Introduction

This project ran from July 2007 to December 2008, and was funded under the 2007 round of ALTC Grants Scheme - Priority Projects Programme.

The project was a collaboration between the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (The University of Melbourne) and the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (University of Wollongong).

1.1 The project team

Kerri-Lee Harris (CSHE, The University of Melbourne) as project director
Kelly Farrell (CSHE, The University of Melbourne) as project manager
Maureen Bell (CEDIR, University of Wollongong)
Marcia Devlin (Deakin University)
Richard James (CSHE, The University of Melbourne)

1.2 The project aims

The project sought to encourage and support greater participation in peer review of teaching through the creation of resources to assist institutions to effectively implement policies and programs of peer review of teaching. To this end the project aimed to identify current national practice, engage the higher education community in discussion of peer review of teaching, and ensure alignment between peer review of teaching and the criteria and guidelines for the ALTC Awards for Australian University Teaching.

1.3 The people involved

The project involved extensive consultation with people from across the Australian university sector. Listed below are the various groups, based on the nature of their involvement in the project.

Reference group

The project sought a reference group able to advise on the effective embedding of teaching and learning initiatives within university policies, practices and cultures. To this end, people with various experiences of institutional decision-making were involved:

Professor Gail Hart
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), University of Tasmania

Associate Professor Peter Ling
Director, Academic Development and Support, Swinburne University of Technology

Ms Julia McQuillan
Acting Vice-Principal, Human Resources, University of Melbourne

Dr Elizabeth McDonald
Australian Learning and Teaching Council (to March 2008)

Professor David Murphy
Director, Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, Monash University

Associate Professor Michele Scoufis
Higher education consultant (University of Sydney and ALTC)

Professor Barry Sheehan
Professorial Fellow, CSHE, University of Melbourne

Expert workshop group

In order to learn from the experiences of people involved in the implementation of peer review of teaching in a range of universities and contexts, a group of 11 people were invited to participate in an ‘expert workshop’ in April 2008. This group continued their involvement in the project in various ways,
including through contributions and comments during the development of the handbook, and as speakers at the November colloquium.

Professor John Bushnell  
Deputy Dean, Director of the Graduate Medical Programme  
University of Wollongong

Dr Alex Gentle  
Senior Lecturer, Department of Optometry and Vision Science  
The University of Melbourne

Associate Professor Sue Jones  
Head of School, Zoology  
University of Tasmania

Dr Kay Martinez  
Associate Dean Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Arts Education and Social Sciences  
James Cook University

Ms Rosalind McCulloch  
Associate Director, Teaching and Learning Support Services  
Queensland University of Technology

Ms Corinna Ridley  
Senior Educator  
Teaching and Learning  
Victoria University

Dr Diana Quinn  
Team Leader  
Academic Development  
University of South Australia

Associate Professor Michele Scoufis  
Higher Education Consultant  
University of Sydney and ALTC

Dr Ian Solomonides  
Senior Lecturer  
Institute of Higher Education, Research and Development  
Macquarie University

Ms Karen Stammers  
Lecturer, School of Education  
Consultant, Staff College  
Victoria University

Ms Jan Wallbridge  
Consultant  
Staff College  
Victoria University

**Consultants**

The project commissioned consultants in the following roles:

1. Project evaluation, both in terms of the process and outcomes from the project.  
   Assoc Professor Peter Ling  
   Assoc. Dean (Academic Liaison), Swinburne Professional Learning  
   Swinburne University of Technology

A report from the evaluation is to be provided to the Project Team and to the ALTC in late December 2008.

2. Independent review of the draft handbook
In October, a full draft of the handbook was provided for review. Dr Asmar had no previous
association with the project, and so brought an independent perspective as well as her extensive
experience in university teaching and learning development.

Other acknowledgements
In addition to the people named above, the project team acknowledges the many people from across
the sector who provided input at various stages of the project. This includes the people who gave their
time to respond to the mapping survey in late 2007, the twenty individuals contributing to the case
studies, and the many P/DVC(A)s and other institutional representatives who provided feedback on
the draft handbook during October-November 2008.

The project team also thanks the CSHE staff who contributed in various ways to the handbook
development and the colloquium organisation: Dr Carole Hooper, Ms Gabrielle Grigg, and Ms Connie
Yuen.

1.4 Communications
Several strategies were used for communicating the project’s objectives and events with specific
groups and more broadly.

Project website
A website describing the project — its aims, processes, and intended outcomes — was created early
in the life of the project, and periodically updated with findings (ie summary from the mapping study)
and information about the colloquium. This site was linked to the CSHE website, and the URL was
included in various communiqués, such as the project flyer distributed through Universities Australia
in May 2008.

Universities Australia
The project director, Dr Kerri-Lee Harris, gave a presentation on the project to the Universities
Australia meeting of P/DVC(A)s in Canberra on 15 May 2008. This presentation provided an
opportunity for discussion of the priorities and concerns of those present regarding peer review of
teaching — in particular, the use of peer review promotion and the nature of associated human
resources policies.

Dissemination of the draft handbook
In October 2008 a full draft of the handbook was sent, for comment, to the Reference Group, the
expert workshop group, and to all universities through P/DVCAs and other institutional contacts in
teaching and learning leadership roles. The feedback received was used to inform subsequent
revisions to the document.

In addition to providing an opportunity for feedback, this dissemination played a significant role in
promoting the resource and the November 2008 colloquium among university leaders.

The draft was also sent to project leaders of the other ALTC-supported peer review of teaching
projects for their information. These were: Dr Denise Wood (University of South Australia); Dr Jo
McKenzie (University of Technology, Sydney); and Professor Geoffrey Crisp (University of Adelaide).
All three accepted invitations to represent their projects at the November colloquium through poster
presentations.

Project communications
Meetings, face-to-face and via teleconference, were held at strategic points during the project. Other
communications were conducted through email.
1.5 Related ALTC projects

The project established contact with the following ALTC-funded peer review of teaching projects.

Ms Michele Scoufis (University of New South Wales) and Professor Geoffrey Crisp (University of Adelaide)

*Develop and implement a pilot program of 'External Peer Review of Teaching' in four Australian Universities*

(The University of New South Wales, The University of Adelaide, University of Canberra, Griffith University)

Dr Jo McKenzie (University of Technology Sydney)

*Embedding peer review of learning and teaching in e-learning and blended learning environments*

(University of Technology Sydney, Curtin University of Technology, Queensland University of Technology, RMIT University, University of South Australia)

Dr Denise Wood (University of South Australia)

*Peer Review of Online Learning and Teaching*

(University of South Australia, Queensland University of Technology, Monash University, RMIT University, Griffith University, Edith Cowan University, University of Tasmania, University of Southern Queensland, Lancaster University - UK)

Associate Professor Michele Scoufis was part of the project Reference Group, and the Expert Workshop.

Information about the project was sent to Prof. Crisp, Dr McKenzie and Dr Wood in May 2008. This included a link to the mapping study summary and project website, and an outline of the handbook structure.

Prof. Crisp, Dr Jo McKenzie and a nominee for Dr Denise Wood attended the 21 Nov 08 Colloquium, and discussed their projects during the poster session.

Reference to the two projects developing approaches and resources to peer review in an online environment was also included in the published handbook.
2. Mapping study

The first stage of the project involved the ‘mapping’ of peer review of teaching activities to get a picture of how peer review is currently being used in Australian universities. This survey was conducted in late 2007, and the following information made available as a summary report on the project website from early 2008.

2.1 Summary of findings
The results of the mapping exercise suggest that peer review of teaching is not a widespread professional activity in Australian universities, and that it is uncommon for it to be used formally, either for purposes of evaluation or teaching development. Broadly speaking, it is therefore likely that relatively few academic staff at Australian universities have engaged in peer review of teaching activities in any systematic or formalised way. While this is the case, there are institutions where peer review programs have been implemented successfully or are in the early stages of implementation.

In summary, key aspects of the findings of the mapping stage are:

- That size and type of university has no bearing on whether peer review of teaching is used and how;
- That the context in which peer review of teaching is used most frequently is for new and sessional staff as part of foundations courses and/or tutor training programs;
- That where there are practices around peer review of teaching, they are generally not embedded in policy: for example, two out of 26 institutions surveyed list peer review of teaching as a required source of evidence in promotion applications; and
- That peer review of teaching programs appear to be most successful when they have both a management-level ‘champion’ and a coordinating staff member with specific responsibility for development and implementation.

2.2 Methodology
The mapping process entailed two primary methods: searches of university websites for information about peer review of teaching activities and resources, and interviews with staff from a number of Australian universities. It was determined that staff from academic development and teaching and learning units would be the primary contacts for this part of the mapping process as it was deemed likely that these people would be best-placed to have a broad understanding of the use of teaching development and evaluation methods across their institution. However, it should be noted that this does not mean they have a detailed knowledge of all teaching and learning activities in what are often large and complex institutions. Thus, the responses received were treated as subjective and as the perspectives of individuals, rather than representing institutional responses.

Contacts from a total of 26 universities were surveyed for the mapping stage, the majority via semi-structured telephone conversations, but in a few cases responses to questions were returned by email. Contacts were asked about current evaluation methods and whether peer review of teaching was used at their institution and, specifically, if it was used as part of Graduate Certificate programs and foundations courses for new staff. They were asked whether there were any formal programs of peer review of teaching occurring in departments, faculties and schools and whether these included any policy connections, particularly to promotion policies. They were then asked what they felt were the challenges, issues and impediments – if any - to peer review of teaching being implemented as an accepted form of teaching development and/or evaluation at their institution.

2.3 Detailed findings

Graduate Certificate and foundations courses
A small number of universities (7 out of 26) include peer review of teaching in the curriculum for Graduate Certificate in University Teaching (or equivalent) courses – to varying degrees of intensity and formality – but most (17) do not. Two universities included in this survey do not offer a Graduate Certificate in University Teaching.
Peer review of teaching activities are, however, slightly more likely to be run in foundations courses for new staff and in tutor training programs: 10 of the 26 universities employ some form of peer review in these programs. Again, the nature and depth of activities varied between universities.

**Dispersed activities in departments, schools and faculties**

It appears that it is relatively rare for individual academic departments, schools or faculties in Australian universities to be conducting in-house peer review of teaching programs, at least in any systematic way. Contacts suggested that there was probably *ad hoc* or informal peer review taking place in their institution (for example, where one staff member asks another for advice on teaching or a head of department reviews a staff member when there are questions about teaching performance) but the majority were unaware of any formal programs running in departments.

While there were a few exceptions to this rule, even at universities where departments were engaging in peer review it was on a relatively small scale and tended to be occurring ‘in pockets’ (as one contact put it).

**Current policy linkages**

Peer review of teaching activities are also taking place in order for academic staff to collect evidence for promotion applications. 13 of the 26 universities surveyed include peer review as a possible source of evidence (although it is impossible to know how many staff are actually using it) while 11 universities’ promotion policies contain no mention of peer review of policies are concerned, two universities have a link between probation policies and peer review of teaching: at one institution a large faculty is using peer review of teaching as teaching. Two universities have an institution-wide requirement that staff provide peer review evidence as part of promotion applications (one faculty at another university includes it as a requirement). At these two institutions it is mandatory for applicants to submit student evaluation data and peer and/or supervisor evaluation as evidence of teaching quality.

Where other personnel policies are concerned, only two universities appear to have a link between probation policies and peer review of teaching: at one institution a large faculty is using peer review of teaching as personnel a mandatory element of the probation process, and at another university participation in the Graduate Certificate of University Teaching (which includes two peer review of teaching sessions) is compulsory for probational staff who have teaching roles. Apart from these, no other policy linkages — for example, to appraisal or performance development — were reported by contacts at any of the universities surveyed.

**Reported challenges in implementing peer review of teaching**

Contacts surveyed during the mapping process were asked what they believed to be the challenges in implementing peer review of teaching more broadly in their particular institutional context. It would appear from the responses provided by contacts that peer review of teaching is a largely unfamiliar activity that is generally unsupported both by policy and culture in Australian universities.

The most common challenges reported by contacts were:

- Time and workload of academic staff;
- Teaching culture: teaching is perceived as a private, ‘closed-door’ activity;
- A lack of understanding of the benefits of peer review of teaching among academic staff and university management; and
- How peer review is ‘sold’ to staff: suspicion about managerial objectives; rejection of ‘top down’ mandates or that peer review is ‘yet another instrument of accountability.’

**Conditions that appear to assist in implementing peer review of teaching**

It is worth noting that while teaching culture was identified by a number of contacts as a barrier to peer review of teaching being adopted more widely, the picture was not entirely bleak, with some contacts describing their institution as committed to improving teaching or there being a ‘lot of energy for teaching’ at the present time, even if peer review was not one of the strategies on the agenda for teaching enhancement. In addition, while a large number of contacts felt staff would react negatively to the prospect of undertaking peer review of teaching for the reasons outlined above, others (though admittedly a smaller group) indicated that staff at their institution would, broadly speaking, consider
peer review a reasonable requirement and/or would be willing to engage in it if it were able to be accommodated within their current workload model.

While the diversity in the breadth and nature of the various peer review programs/activities that are taking place at Australian universities makes it difficult to draw conclusions about why these particular programs have been successfully established, there are two major commonalities in the conditions that emerge. These are described below.

At least one management-level ‘champion’
Successful implementation of peer review of teaching appears to depend, to a large extent, on the unequivocal support of at least one senior-level manager. While support at this level is obviously influential, where peer review in faculties and departments is concerned, the support of faculty Deans and/or Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) or a head of department is essential to the uptake of peer review of teaching.

A staff member with specific responsibility for peer review of teaching
As well as having high-level support, the successful implementation of peer review is often contingent on the appointment (be it formal or informal) of a staff member who has responsibility for designing and supporting the implementation of peer review of teaching programs. In most — though not all — cases this person has had a personal interest in peer review of teaching and has provided the time and energy to raise awareness of and interest in peer review among departments, faculties, or individual academic staff.
3. Workshops

Drawing on insights from the mapping study, in early 2008 the project team developed a draft structure for what would ultimately become the ‘handbook’, including a draft set of principles and design guides. This formed the basis for discussions at two key events in March and April 2008.

3.1 Reference Group meeting 7th March, 2008

The Reference Group met at the CSHE for a 4-hour workshop, focussed on discussion of the draft resources. In addition, suggestions were sought regarding the next stages of the project and planning for the November colloquium.

**Agenda**

1. Project Update
2. Rolling discussion and feedback on the draft Resource Package including:
   - Draft National Principles for Peer Review of Teaching in Higher Education
   - Draft design models for building peer review of teaching programs
3. The next stage of the project

[see 1.3 for details of the Reference Group]

3.2 Expert workshop 4th April, 2008

The expert workshop (EW) was a full day event held at the CSHE, and involved ten members of the EW group (from eight universities), Associate Professor Peter Ling (as project evaluator), and the project team. [see 1.3 for list of the EW group]

The nature of the event is described in the following extract from the invitation sent to participants:

“The aim of the project is to design a suite of national resources to help Australian universities effectively implement policies and programs of peer review of teaching. As someone with experience in implementing a peer review of teaching program at your own institution, we would like to invite you to contribute to the project by participating in a one-day workshop.

This ‘Expert Workshop’ is an opportunity for us to learn from you, and for you to contribute ideas and suggestions to the Project Team. In particular, it will be an opportunity for us to gather feedback from you on the draft documentation being developed as part of the Framework for Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education. We have deliberately kept the group small – just 15-20 people – in order for there to be sufficient time and opportunity for discussion of the issues and the exchange of ideas and experiences around peer review of teaching. The workshop will involve people from a diverse range of institutions, with diverse perspectives through their different roles within their institutions.” (correspondence sent to invitees, 1 Feb 08)

**Expert workshop program**

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Morning tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00am</td>
<td>Welcome and project overview</td>
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<td>11.30am</td>
<td>Participant presentations (5 mins each)</td>
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<td>12.30am</td>
<td>Open discussion</td>
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<td>1.00pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.45pm</td>
<td>Discussion of draft resources:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- National Principles</td>
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<td>- Design models</td>
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<td><strong>NB: these were forwarded to participants prior to the workshop</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.00pm</td>
<td>Working afternoon tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Workshop end</td>
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The insights gained through these discussions were highly influential in the subsequent development of the handbook by the project team. In addition, members of the EW were directly involved in the preparation of case studies for the handbook, and in presentations at the November colloquium.
4. The handbook

A key outcome from the project is the following publication, referred to in this report as ‘the handbook’:


ISBN 9780734040459
Available at: http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au

4.1 Handbook development

The following decisions were taken in the planning and development of the handbook:

• Designed for those involved in developing programs of peer review of teaching
  
  While some sections of the handbook will be of interest to any university staff member involved in peer review, the document is principally designed for leaders of teaching and learning initiatives — for example, DVC (Academic), Deans or department heads with responsibility for identifying academic priorities for the institution; staff with responsibility for improving the quality of teaching; staff with responsibility for conducting academic/professional development programs.

• Appropriate to the higher education context in Australia
  
  Through the combination of the mapping study, reference group and EW group, the experiences of people from 27 Australian universities contributed to the development of the handbook. The authors also drew upon their collective knowledge and experience of the national higher education environment, both in terms of policies and practices.

• Providing a framework defining effective peer review of teaching in Australian universities
  
  A principal outcome from the project was the development of a set of core principles that define peer review of teaching in the Australian context. The framework also highlights the potential benefits of peer review, and the key considerations for effective implementation of peer review programs.

• Supportive of diverse university contexts and approaches
  
  Both the framework and the practical guides were designed with consideration of diverse institutional contexts and priorities. The handbook does not prescribe a standard model of ‘best practice’. Rather, it highlights the key considerations associated with peer review of teaching. A variety of programs and approaches are described, united by the underlying principles and framework.

• Highlighting the role of policies in effectively embedding peer review into academic cultures
  
  One of the key challenges in embedding peer review of teaching into academic practice is ensuring the appropriate connections to institutional policies. While policy support is necessary for sustained and widespread engagement, inappropriate policies can be an impediment to effective implementation.

• Incorporating practical guides to program design based on the program’s purpose
  
  The four step-by-step design guides in the handbook are based on the premise that programs of peer review will differ, depending upon their principal purpose. On this basis, the seven
‘decision points’ of each guide are the same, with differing recommendations and explanations (presented as ‘key considerations’) depending upon the purpose described.

- **Illustrative case studies**
  The mapping study and workshops demonstrated the value of individuals’ ‘stories’ in highlighting the diverse origins for peer review programs, and the potential benefits and challenges for individual participants. Five programs were identified on the basis that they represented various program foci (e.g. institution, faculty, department, foundation program), different universities, and different origins and purposes. The case studies are not descriptions of the programs, rather they present the experiences of people involved in the design and implementation, and staff participating in the roles of reviewee or reviewer.

- **A book rather than a website**
  Early in the project it was decided that a document which could be distributed in hardcopy as well as in pdf format (i.e. cohesive and available when ‘off-line’) would be appropriate for the resource.

The following page is a copy of the contents page from the handbook.

4.2 External peer review

In addition to the feedback invited from university representatives, the Reference Group and EW group (see Section 1.4), the project commissioned a review of the draft document by a person with no earlier involvement in the project. Dr Christine Asmar (University of Sydney) provided this independent review. Dr Asmar brought to the task extensive experience of working with academic staff in teaching development, and a background of higher education research. This external feedback extensively informed the final revisions of the handbook.

4.3 Handbook distribution

The handbook was launched in Melbourne on 21 November 2008 at the Peer Review of University Teaching Colloquium (see Section 5). All participants in the colloquium received a print copy of the handbook.

In early December 2008, print copies will be posted to: DVC(A), or equivalent, in each of 38 Australian universities (as per the Universities Australia database); and to directors of the academic development units, based on the CADAD mailing list.

The pdf version of the handbook is available from the CSHE website. Details of the URL link were distributed with the print copies, and also provided to the ALTC and EDNA.

According to ISBN requirements, print copies were provided to the State Library of Victoria and the National Library of Australia, and the University of Melbourne library. In addition, a copy was sent to the library of each of the other 37 UA-listed universities.
Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education: A handbook to support institutions in developing effective policies and practices

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5. National colloquium

A one-day colloquium was held on Friday 21 November 2008, at the University of Melbourne (ICT Building, Barry Street, Parkville). The event was titled:

**Peer Review of University Teaching: Capitalising on Collegial Expertise and Feedback**

While registration was required, no fee was charged. The project covered the travel and accommodation costs of invited speakers, reference group and expert workshop members. Other participants made their own arrangements for travel and accommodation.

5.1 Aims of the event

The following text was used to promote the event:

*Peer review of teaching – the practice of colleagues providing feedback on one another’s teaching – is university teaching. Yet introducing effective peer review into the teaching culture of an institution is not a simple matter.*

*This colloquium will describe the potential benefits of peer review of teaching, while also examining the challenges and decision points for institutions choosing to promote peer review activities.*

*The event will include:*
  * keynote presentations;*
  * a poster session;*
  * a range of topic-based group discussions; and*
  * the launch of a resource pack to assist in the design and implementation of peer review of teaching programs.*

*Participants will have the opportunity to share experiences or concerns regarding peer review of teaching, and to consider the possibilities for their particular teaching and learning environment.*

*The colloquium is open to all university staff, and will be of particular interest to those with responsibility for leading teaching and learning initiatives and policy making at their institutions. There is no registration fee required.*

5.2 Program

The program included keynote presentations by Professor Tom Angelo (La Trobe University), Dr Kay Martinez (James Cook University) and Professor Shirley Alexander (University of Technology, Sydney). In addition, small group discussions were led by members of the project team on a range of key issues associated with peer review of teaching.

A two-page program (pp 20-21) was distributed in to all registrants in the week of the colloquium, and provided at registration on the day.

5.3 Promotion of the colloquium

The following methods were used in promotion of the colloquium:

**Project website**

Colloquium details were provided on the project website, including the program, keynote speakers, colloquium aims, and online registration. In addition, an alert and link was posted on the CSHE home page.

**Newsletters**

Notifications were distributed in the HERDSA newsletters during September, October and November and in the October EDNA newsletter (Higher Education Update #34). In addition, academic development units were notified via the CADAD secretariat.

**Flyers**

In early October, electronic flyers were sent to the following groups, with an invitation to circulate the information to interested colleagues: all members of the Reference group and EW group; ALTC;
colloquium presenters; all universities via P/DVC(A)s; the leaders of the other ALTC peer review projects; and all contributors to the case studies.

5.4 Participants

The colloquium involved 85 registrants, representing institutional leadership, academic development units, academic staff, and professional staff in teaching-related roles.

For example, registrants’ position descriptions included:
Dean; Associate Dean; Head of school; Director Teaching & Learning Unit; Lecturer in Higher Education; course coordinator; lecturer; lawyer; project manager; researcher.

Registrants from the following 29 universities were present on the day:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australian Catholic University</th>
<th>The University of Melbourne</th>
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<tr>
<td>Central Queensland University</td>
<td>The University of New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curtin University</td>
<td>The University of Newcastle</td>
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<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>The University of Queensland</td>
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<td>Edith Cowan University</td>
<td>The University of Sydney</td>
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<td>Flinders University</td>
<td>The University of Western Australia</td>
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<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>University of Ballarat</td>
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<td>James Cook University</td>
<td>University of Canberra</td>
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<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>University of South Australia</td>
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<td>Macquarie University</td>
<td>University of Tasmania</td>
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<td>Monash University</td>
<td>University of Technology, Sydney</td>
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<td>RMIT University</td>
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<td>Southern Cross University</td>
<td>University of Wollongong</td>
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<td>Swinburne University of Technology</td>
<td>Victoria University</td>
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<td>The University of Adelaide</td>
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Peer Review of University Teaching
Capitalising on Collegial Expertise and Feedback
— A national colloquium —
21 November 2008
The University of Melbourne

Program

9.30  Opening & welcome (Theatre 1)
      Dr Kerri-Lee Harris (project director)

9.45  Keynote: Professor Tom Angelo (Theatre 1)
      Politics, perils and pitfalls of peer review: caveats and guidelines for success from international research

10.30 Launch of the handbook (Theatre 1)
      Dr Elizabeth McDonald (ALTC) & Dr Kerri-Lee Harris
      Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education

11.00  Morning break (Foyer)

11.15  Keynote: Dr Kay Martinez (Theatre 1)
      PReT: a ‘to-do’ list

12.00  Parallel session I
      A. Identifying criteria for feedback: managing diverse contexts & priorities (Room 206)
      B. Maximising feedback from peer review (Room UG15)
      C. Designing a program: decision points for institutions (Theatre 3)

12.45  Lunch and posters (Foyer)

1.30   Keynote: Professor Shirley Alexander (Theatre 1)
      Implementation: the role of university management

2.15  Parallel session II
      A. Identifying criteria for feedback: managing diverse contexts & priorities (Room 206)
      B. Maximising feedback from peer review (Room UG15)
      D. Peer review & academic CVs: using peer review as evidence (Theatre 3)

3.00   Afternoon break (Foyer)

3.15   Expert panel discussion:
      Embedding peer review in policies, practices and cultures (Theatre 1)
      Professor Shirley Alexander, Professor John Bushnell, Dr Alex Gentle, Associate Professor Sue Jones, Dr Kay Martinez & Dr Ian Solomonides. Voices of experience from across the sector discuss the next steps toward embedding peer review of teaching in Australian universities.

3.55   Closing remarks (Theatre 1)
      Dr Kerri-Lee Harris.

4.00   Close
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Features of the day

Three keynote presentations from people with expertise in the policy and practice of higher education teaching and learning

Professor Tom Angelo
Professor of Higher Education, PVC (Curriculum & Academic Planning), and Director of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning Centre
La Trobe University

Dr Kay Martinez
Associate Dean Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Arts Education and Social Sciences
James Cook University

Professor Shirley Alexander
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Teaching, Learning and Equity)
University of Technology, Sydney

Parallel sessions

Professor Richard James (CSHE, University of Melbourne), Dr Maureen Bell (CEDIR, University of Wollongong) and Professor Marcia Devlin (Deakin University) will present on four key topics associated with peer review of teaching. Along with Dr Kent-Lee Harris and Dr Kelly Farrell, the presenters co-authored the handbook, Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education, and their presentations in these interactive sessions will provide insights into the principles underpinning the resource and the ways it might be used.

Expert panel discussion: Embedding peer review in policies, practices and cultures

Six people with various experiences in implementing peer review of teaching programs in Australian universities will discuss ideas for the next step — strategies for embedding peer review of teaching within the academic environment of universities. This interactive-style session will seek to draw upon the diverse institutional perspectives represented on the panel.

Discussion with interested colleagues from 29 Australian universities

Nearly 100 people from 29 universities have registered for the colloquium, and therefore lunch and the other breaks will be an opportunity to discuss ideas with colleagues similarly interested in the potential of peer review of teaching.

Launch of the handbook

Each person in attendance will receive a print copy of Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education. A handbook to support institutions in developing and embedding effective policies and practices. The ALTC-funded project that led to the development of this resource will be described.