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Achieving successful retention & productive learning in universities

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Our Changing Context - Broader change forces

- Globalisation, GATS, FTAs
- Emergence of China and India as key players
- Climate change & fuel
- Cheaper travel (?)
- Sub-prime credit crisis
- Potential exit of the baby boomers

Higher education - specific change forces

- Rapid growth in number of HE places
- Decreased funding from the public purse
- Pressure to develop new sources of income & increased competition
- Maintaining standards
- User pays - students as consumers
- Rapid changes in IT
- Work and study
- Gen Y
- Change capable and change averse cultures

Retaining students matters in such a context

- We must not only gain but also retain students
- Retention matters morally
- Retention matters financially
- Retention is about relationships

Good ideas with no ideas on how to implement them are wasted ideas

- It is the combination of the 'what' & 'how' that counts for university success
- AUQA looks for outcomes not just inputs
- We can evaluate 'quality' at 4 levels

Understanding Quality & Evaluation

Evaluation = making judgements of quality
Quality = fitness for purpose/ of purpose

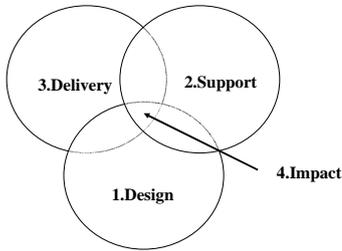
We can evaluate the quality of learning & teaching in a university at four levels:

1. Quality of course design – 'a good idea'
2. Quality & alignment of support & resources – feasibility
3. Quality of delivery – student & staff feedback
4. Quality of impact on those intended to benefit

Inputs = 1 & 2 Outcomes = 3 & 4

Evaluation can be used to prove
or improve quality

Diagram One
Quality Management for Learning Programs



What engages and retains students in productive learning?
Key findings



- It is the total experience that shapes students' judgement of quality
- Learning is a profoundly social experience
- Aligned and well managed expectations
- Targeted & sustained transition support
- Active learning (note *learning* is not *teaching*)
- Assessment focused self-managed learning guides
- Flexible and coherent learning designs
- Consistently accessible, responsive, quality staff – academic and general

What engages & retains students
– RATED CLASS A quality tests



Relevance
 Active learning – 60 options
 Theory-practice links
 Expectations clear
 Direction clear

Capabilities that count
 Learning pathways – flexible, majors, submajors etc
 Assessment – clarity, problem-based, feedback
 Staff – committed, up to date, accessible & can teach
 Support – aligned, flexible & responsive

Access – participation as easy as possible; access to staff and services productive

How best to track the quality of learning & teaching



- One approach which has resulted in 10% improvement in overall satisfaction & 4% improvement in retention in three years
- UWS system for Tracking & Improving Learning & Teaching (TILT) - nested
- At: http://www.uws.edu.au/opq/planning_and_quality/tracking_and_improving_performance

How to improve the quality of learning & teaching



Findings from the ALTC *Learning Leaders* project

- Address high importance & low performance items (quantitative data)
- Address high importance and low quality items from *CEQuery* (qualitative data)
- Benchmarking for improvement
 Use the same surveys based on *Diagram One* & the *CEQuery* subdomains with similar partner institutions – learn from each other by sharing high rating solutions to common quality improvement 'hot spots'
- Try out solutions under controlled conditions, track, refine and then scale up

How to engage people in needed change



Findings from the ALTC *Learning Leaders* project

- Understand that change is a learning (& unlearning) process for all concerned – it is not an event
- The key engagement motivators for the staff are the same as they are for students– relevance, clarity, desirability, feasibility
- Provide proven solutions to agreed gaps – in the context of the course and the students involved
- Culture ('how we do things around here') counts – it is the total experience that helps - peer group is a key influence
- Consider using a Head of Program Network led by the PVC
- Change doesn't happen it must be led

A change capable university culture 

Findings from the ALTC *Learning Leaders* project

- Action focus – ‘why don’t we’ not ‘why don’t they’
- Evidence based decisions – transparent & consultative
- Clear what really counts – moral purpose
- System alignment – strategy, funding, rewards, praise, support
- Targeted communication – ‘listen, link then lead’
- Considered use of meetings with a focus on action & core business
- People know who does what – absence of cliques
- Senior executives are in regular contact with line staff
- Leaders ‘model’ the culture – ‘practice what they preach’
- Staff are proud to be working at the institution
- Staff want to improve – actively identify ‘gaps’ they need to develop; are accountable
- Provision of proven solutions to specific improvement priorities
- Systematic sharing of good practice
- Administrative processes are agile and ‘add value’

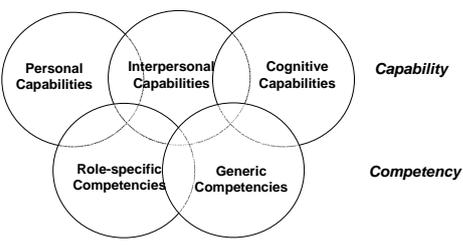
500 Learning Leaders in 20 universities – analogies 

Findings from the ALTC *Learning Leaders* project

- Herding cats
- Juggling
- Being a gardener
- Conducting an orchestra/directing a play
- Being the captain of a sailing ship
- Coaching a successful sporting team
- Climbing a mountain together
- Plumbing a building – essential but no one sees it
- Being a diplomat
- Wearing multiple hats at the same time
- Being the older sibling in a large family
- Working with a dysfunctional family
- Being the minister of a church where only the converted come
- Match-making
- Bartending
- Being a small fish in a large cloudy pond
- Being a salmon trying to swim upstream
- Rowing without an oar
- Sailing a leaky ship - faulty bilge pump
- Being the meat in the sandwich
- Wading through bureaucratic mud;
- Pushing a pea uphill with my nose
- Riding a bicycle on a tightrope
- Having a Ferrari with no money for fuel
- Being a one armed paper hanger working in a gale
- Trying to nail jelly to the ceiling whilst trying to put out spot fires with my feet
- Trying to drive a nail into a wall of blanc-mange – little resistance but not result
- Being in groundhog day
- Living in a medieval castle
- Being a rubric’s cube
- Being in an Escher painting

The capable learning & teaching leader 

Findings from the ALTC *Learning Leaders* project



Capability

- Personal Capabilities
- Interpersonal Capabilities
- Cognitive Capabilities

Competency

- Role-specific Competencies
- Generic Competencies

The capabilities that count for effective leadership (& teaching) 

Findings from the ALTC *Learning Leaders* project

Emotional Intelligence Personal	Intellectual capability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-regulation • Decisiveness • Commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis • Strategy • Flexibility & Responsiveness
Emotional Intelligence Interpersonal	Key skills & Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing • Empathising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and Teaching • University Operations • Self-organisation

Key leadership lessons 

Findings from the ALTC *Learning Leaders* project

- Leader as teacher
- Leader as model
- Leader as learner
- Everyone is a leader in their own area of expertise

Next steps – key change ‘hot spots’ 

The ‘what’	The ‘how’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment • Transition • ICT- enabled learning • New modes & locations for learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust tracking & improvement system • A change capable culture • Addressing the succession crisis • Leadership selection and online leadership learning system

References



CEQuery

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/access_student_voice.htm

Learning Leaders in Times of change

http://www.altc.edu.au/carrick/webdav/users/siteadmin/public/grants_leadership_uws_acer_summary_june_08.pdf

