

# Learning Advising: forces shaping our work, and the opportunities they offer

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in  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

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LAS 2003**

*“in the future...”*

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**Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?**

**Peter Zeegers**  
*Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia*

# Outline

1. Where do we come from?
2. What are we, and what have we achieved?
3. Where are we going?
4. So ... what *might* we be in the future?

Where do we  
come from?

1950s

## **Deficit remediation**

Counselling services addressing 'study skills', aimed to 'discover and so correct the handicapping factors which appeared to pre-dispose many first-generation entrants to academic difficulty'

(Anderson & Eaton, 1982, p.22).

1970s  
1980s

## Language and learning specialists emerge



Gordon Taylor  
Monash 1974-1998



Carolyn Webb  
Usyd 1974-1995



John Clanchy  
ANU 1975-1994



Brigid Ballard  
ANU 1977-1999



Hanne Bock  
La Trobe 1979-1990

| 1970s  
| 1980s

## First 'study skills' conference, 1980



### Study skills acquiring increasing importance

Participants from 12 universities recently attended a Study Skills Conference, organised by ANU's Communication and Study Skills Unit, at Burmann College from 11 to 13 May. Participation was restricted to academic advisers, counsellors, tutors and lecturers assisting students in their approach to study at universities in Australia.

The discussion and papers focused on the role of study skills and learning skills advisers in the light of the Williams Report which recommended increased emphasis on the

need to 'improve students' techniques of learning'. Separate sessions considered the special needs of first year students, various approaches to teaching specific skills, and the nature of the services being offered.

The Conference, the first of its kind, marks the increasing importance of study skills work in universities. Various models of organisation and teaching methods are being tried in Australian universities and the opportunity to discuss these approaches and pool ideas was appreciated. It is hoped to make this select Conference an annual event.

*Left: Attending the conference were, from l to r, John Clanchy, Head of ANU's Communication and Study Skills Unit; Gloria Chan, Counsellor, Queensland University; Brian James, Senior Counsellor, University of Melbourne; and Gordon Taylor, Higher Education Advisory Research Unit, Monash University.*

| 1970s  
| 1980s

## **First 'study skills' conference, 1980**

‘...if there's one thing that characterised the way we thought about it, we're kind of **intermediaries** and **interpreters** of this whole culture of knowledge and learning, and we're **in between** the student in a sense, we're in between the student and the practitioner...’ (John Clanchy)

| 1970s  
| 1980s

## **First ‘study skills’ conference, 1980**

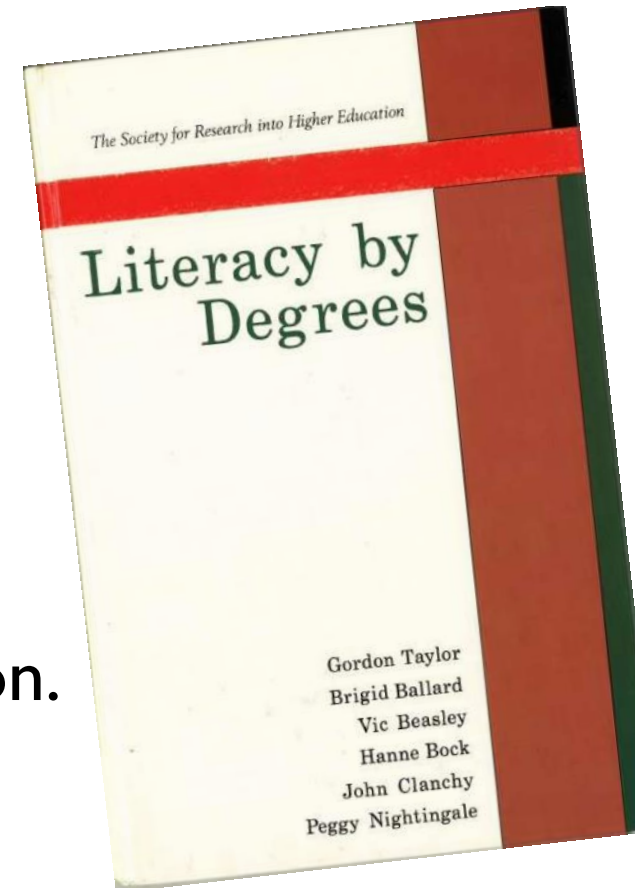
‘...we had a lot that wasn’t in common, and that was a real eye opener because we realised that we came from very different backgrounds and had very different understandings of what we were doing’

(John Clanchy)

| 1970s  
| 1980s

## Early theorisation of field

Theories shaped by roles and their contexts of practice. Influenced by psychology, education, epistemology, linguistics, second language acquisition.



| 1970s  
| 1980s

## **Fundamental shift from deficit remediation**

‘when we talk about the reading and writing failures of tertiary students we are dealing with a complex set of phenomena which we cannot begin to understand unless we consider the total learning and language environment in which those failures occur’  
(John Clanchy, 1976)

1970s  
1980s

## Persistence of deficit remediation models

### Uni. English 'fix-it' man

MELBOURNE, Today: Monash University has appointed Victoria's first university remedial-English adviser.

He is Mr. Gordon Taylor

Mr. Taylor said yesterday there was a literacy problem at the university. He had not been there long enough to know the extent.

But it was part of his job to find how the problem started and precisely what it was.

Already, six cases had been referred to him this year.

Mr. Taylor said the students were not illiterate, but they had trouble with advanced essay writing.

The trouble spots so far seemed to be in style and the flow of writing.



Gordon Taylor

"It is wrong that grammar teaching has been abandoned," he said.

But Mr. Taylor does not see his job as covering

'The first thing to do was to get rid of "remedial teaching officer". So I got rid of the teaching officer and turned that into English advisor but still had the remedial in front ... it took me two years to get rid of the remedial bit, officially that is. You know, because you have a plaque on the door, Remedial English Advisor (laughter).'

| 1970s  
| 1980s

## **Staff development (in disguise)**

‘when we went out to the departments - this is part of Brigid’s **cunning** - [she] always said, “We're here to help your students work better. We're never here to help you teach better,” but actually that's what you were doing...’ (John Clanchy)

| 1970s  
| 1980s

## **Tensions with academic development**

‘...the work we did often got very close to academic teaching development. Tricky boundaries were happening, and the CEDAM people went off more into research, so it was alright, but we were really treading, well we could have been seen to be treading on their paths’ (Brigid Ballard)

## **Key tropes**

## **1970s/1980s**

Self-perception

Specialised, Diverse

Liminality

In-between

Praxis

Contextual, Theoretical

Agency

Disruption, Agitation

Territory

Shifting, In tension

1990s  
2000s

## **Internationalisation, massification, 'quality'**

HE becomes significant export industry

Super-diversity in the student cohort:  
international, and widening equity participation  
(low-SES, first in family, regional, indigenous)

English language proficiency concerns

Public pressure to develop 'generic skills'

Quality assurance agencies established

1990s  
2000s

## **Increase in ‘embedding’**

More opportunities to collaborate with lecturers to embed academic literacies in curriculum

This ‘may have been the first time that the potential of ALL practice became clear and the first time that the practice was conceptualised as anything other than clinical and remedial’

(Stevenson & Kokkinn 2007, p. 49)

1990s  
2000s

## **International connections appear**

Lea & Street (1998), 'Student Writing in Higher Education: an Academic Literacies Approach'

Wingate (2006), 'Doing away with "study skills"'

ALDinHE in the UK

LSAC in Canada

ATLAANZ in NZ

1990s  
2000s

## **A picture of ‘disquiet’**

There is ‘a prevailing insider-outsider discourse, and a sense in which LAS professionals feel they are often isolated from the mainstream of academic life, inhabitants of the peripheral fringes of their universities.’

1990s  
2000s

## A picture of 'disquiet'

- no commonly accepted name for the professional role
- roles poorly understood by others (as "the remedial tutor", "the English lecturer", "that person who helps students", etc.)
- no agreed standard for staff awards and levels
- generic institutional promotion criteria insensitive to LAS work
- few staff successful in being promoted to higher level positions
- no professional association

Key tropes	1970s/1980s	1990s/2000s
Self-perception	Specialised, Diverse	Undefined, Misunderstood
Liminality	In-between	Outside
Praxis	Contextual, Theoretical	Organisational, Industrial
Agency	Disruption, Agitation	Disempowerment
Territory	Shifting, In tension	In the margins

Where do we  
come from?

**Solution: establish ‘who we are’**

Organise into a profession



Conduct a census to identify our characteristics



Clarify roles, responsibilities to justify value



Assert fundamental academic nature of the work



Identify our ‘canonical’ knowledge



Articulate our practices



Establish a journal



What are we?

## **A 2016 survey of ALL practitioners**

Diverse disciplinary and work backgrounds

Intellectual interest and social justice, activism

Strong desire to collaborate with academic developers, and about half already do

So they are increasingly integrated into curricula...

...but still lament 'low status and lack of understanding or appreciation by management'

What are we?

## **A 2016 survey of ALL practitioners**

39% academic, 50% professional, 12% other

Almost 40% satisfied with appointment

Only 8% unsatisfied with appointment

Academic and professional appointments each have 'pros/cons', and are context dependent

Only 58% thought the role *should* be academic

What are we?

## **A 2016 survey of ALL managers**

All managers require Bachelor as minimum qual.

Most require additional study (e.g. GDip, MA)

One requires PhD (and 6 others prefer it)

Some preference for Education or Linguistics quals,  
and to some extent EAL/ESL/TESOL

Teaching experience a requirement for many

Curriculum and e-learning preferred by most

What are we?

## **A 2016 survey of ALL managers**

We are knowledgeable across a range of disciplines

We need a range of skills and experiences

We adapt, upskill in response to changing demands

Resource development the new top skill

We use constructivist approaches

We are engaging more and more with eLearning pedagogies

<b>Key tropes</b>	<b>1970s/1980s</b>	<b>1990s/2000s</b>	<b>2010s</b>
Self-perception	Specialised, Diverse	Undefined, Misunderstood	Unappreciated, Diverse, Transdisciplinary
Liminality	In-between	Outside	Below
Praxis	Contextual, Theoretical	Organisational, Industrial	Theoretical, Multi-Skilled, Adaptable
Agency	Disruption, Agitation	Disempowerment	Disruption, Agitation
Territory	Shifting, In tension	In the margins	Shifting, Collaborative

Where are  
we going?

## What are the forces shaping our work?

More students and a higher student to staff ratio (AVCC, 2001b; AVCC, 2002)

More students from diverse cultures, languages & previous experiences (ABS, 2003)

More pressure to adopt/integrate “new” teaching methodologies, including IT

An increased range of study options

The competing issues of efficiency versus efficacy (Karmel, 2000; Long, 2000)

Resource and infrastructure implications (AVCC, 2001a).

AALL Conference 2003, “...in the future”

‘Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?, Peter Zeegers

Where are  
we going?

**More students, higher staff:student ratio**

Yes, BUT...

institutions need BOTH high-volume **scalable**  
approaches to language and learning development  
AND

ways of identifying students at-risk and providing  
**personalised**, tailored support and development

Where are  
we going?

## **More diverse students**

Yes, BUT...

institutions are considering not only students' support needs (language and learning)

**BUT ALSO**

how students can learn to work within diversity (an **employability** skill); and how can curriculum and teaching be more inclusive of diverse knowledges and perspectives.

Where are  
we going?

**More pressure to adopt new methods, tools**

Yes.

Online learning will be ubiquitous, in every program.

**BUT**

To compete, institutions must also offer an excellent face to face experience.

Where are  
we going?

## Efficiency vs efficacy

No.

We need efficiency *and* efficacy.

Demand for data-driven decision making.

**Analytics** are key.

Empirical approaches: qualitative, quantitative,  
theoretical

Where are  
we going?

## **Resource and infrastructure implications**

Yes.

Money is increasingly targeted towards strategic projects, not units/services.

Deliverables

Where are  
we going?

## **An increased range of study options**

Yes – on an unprecedented scale.

‘Unbundling and rebundling’

The disaggregation of higher education into its component parts, and reaggregation of the parts into new configurations

(Czerniewicz, 2018)

Laura Czerniewicz, in *Educause* 2018

<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/10/unbundling-and-rebundling-higher-education-in-an-age-of-inequality>

Where are  
we going?

## Unbundling and rebundling

### Curriculum and credentials

- program planning and design, course delivery, evaluation: each delivered by someone different.

### Resources

- more granular, modular, multimodal, owned by various parties (e.g. all-in-one textbooks, academic integrity modules, MOOCs)

Laura Czerniewicz, in *Educause* 2018

<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/10/unbundling-and-rebundling-higher-education-in-an-age-of-inequality>

Where are  
we going?

## Unbundling and rebundling

### Expertise

- new roles, automation of roles, online experts, design experts, chatbots, automatic marking

Flexibility, personalisation for diverse students

Expansion of market opportunities for institutions

Laura Czerniewicz, in *Educause* 2018

<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/10/unbundling-and-rebundling-higher-education-in-an-age-of-inequality>

Where are  
we going?

## **Unbundling and rebundling**

The challenge?

The academic body and the curriculum are increasingly fragmented, dispersed, and precarious.

Provision is more generic, de-contextualised.

How do we enable a coherent, contextualised, and supportive learning experience to all students?

Laura Czerniewicz, in *Educause* 2018

<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/10/unbundling-and-rebundling-higher-education-in-an-age-of-inequality>

Where are  
we going?

## **Unbundling and rebundling**

Opportunities?

Online language and learning modules that can be contextualised and 'plugged in' to the LMS

Student data is kept in-house for better analytics

Learning outcomes and assessment – mapping student development and attainment through a program

What might  
we be?

**Solution: establish ‘who we are’ ?**

Organise into a profession

Conduct a census to identify our characteristics

Clarify roles, responsibilities to justify value

Assert fundamental academic nature of the work

Identify our ‘canonical’ knowledge

Articulate our practices

Establish a journal

What might  
we be?

**Making our 'identity' a solution assumes:**

That lack of understanding = lack of respect

That being 'in-between' = lack of visibility, value

That our theoretical and experiential eclecticism  
diminishes our credibility

That our territory disputes, and persistent need to  
disrupt and agitate are symptomatic of 'low status'

What might  
we be?

## **Historical contexts delimit what our “identity” can “be”**

Learning Advisers are deployed to ‘make a difference’ to student learning, in contexts where student learning is perpetually re-problematized: social inclusion, employability, internationalisation, standards

‘A critical turn in higher education research: turning the critical lens on the Academic Language and Learning educator’. Alisa Percy, 2015

# What might we be?

Agent of redemption, ALL in a welfare society		Agent of change, ALL in a learning society	
1950s–1960s: A therapeutic intervention for the ‘academic casualty’	1970s–1980s: An educational intervention for the ‘social casualty’	1990s: A curriculum intervention for the ‘lifelong learner’	2000s: An administrative and pedagogical intervention for the ‘graduate’
The university as ‘development panacea’ (soft social liberalism and post-war reconstruction)	The university as ‘social leveller’ (hard social liberalism and socio-economic crisis)	The university as ‘economic stabiliser’ (market liberalism and competition)	The university as ‘full-service enterprise’ (neoliberalism and the global education market)
Problematising academic wastage (student failure)	Problematising social wastage (participation)	Problematising the curriculum (higher education [HE] reform/skills)	Problematising international competitiveness (reputation & ranking)

‘A critical turn in higher education research: turning the critical lens on the Academic Language and Learning educator’. Alisa Percy, 2015

What might  
we be?

**Historical contexts delimit what our  
“identity” can “be”**

We are ‘unstable, contingent...without a centred  
essence... subjects produced within conflicting  
discourses and cultural practices... subjects, who, as a  
result, are freer than they think’ (E.A. St. Pierre)

‘A critical turn in higher education research: turning the critical lens on the Academic  
Language and Learning educator’.Alisa Percy, 2015

What might  
we be?

## **A highly flexible and open field**

...it's still a highly flexible and open variable field, isn't it? It's not like you've got the set lines of a discipline. ...So it is much less settled, which is an opportunity for people to do all sorts of things...

(John Clanchy)

What might  
we be?

## Responsive to change

‘I think the important thing is that it isn't static. It is actually responsive to changes, and although you're right, we've got a core of different things, I think once we defined ourselves as something specific, we'd be done for, we'd be out-dated ...’

(Brigid Ballard)

What might  
we be?

**Serious ... even if 'they' don't understand**  
...the biggest shift... [is] that this became a field  
rather than an oddity. It's becoming a field that's  
serious about itself and is taken seriously by the  
institution ...even if they don't understand  
particularly well what is being done...

(John Clanchy)

What might  
we be?

## **Transdisciplinary, connecting across institutions**

‘I contest the value of a “silo mentality”... we should be engaging in more vigorous partnerships across converging areas and working towards the co-construction of new knowledge’

What might  
we be?

## **A community of practice?**

A community of practice 'cannot be legislated into existence or defined by decree. .... One can attempt to institutionalise a community of practice, but the community of practice itself will slip through the cracks and remain distinct from its institutionalisation' (Wenger).

What might  
we be?

## **Key tropes**

Self-perception

Liminality

Praxis

Agency

Territory

## **In the future?**

Specialised, Transdisciplinary

Across

Empirical, Adaptable

Responsiveness, Disruption

Open, Collaborative

## **For reflection and discussion**

What stories do you tell yourselves about where you came from?

How do these stories shape your practice, and your relationship to it?

What lies ahead? What challenges do your students and institutions face?

What values and approaches will best support your work into the future?

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# What might we be?

ALL staff:student ratio - 2015												
rank (ALL Ss)	total 2014	international students	ALL staff, n (FTE, not casual)	^	ALL staff:student ratio							
▼ university	enrolments <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>a</sup> n	ACAdemic	GENeral	total ALL	% <sup>a</sup> ; n <sup>a</sup>	ratio all Ss <sup>a</sup>	ratio int. Ss <sup>a</sup>				
8 01 ACU	29 613	10.4	3 093		19.0	19.0 0.0 1:	1 559 1:	163				
26 02 ANU	22 393	27.2	6 089		6.0	6.0 0.0 1:	3 732 1:	1 015				
9 03 BOND	5 880	41.2	2 422		4.0	4.0 0.9 1:	1 470 1:	606				
6 04 CQU	19 396	22.9	4 433	12.0	1.0	13.0 0.0 1:	1 492 1:	34				
3 05 CDU	11 559	15.6	1 804	10.0		10.0 0.0 1:	1 156 1:	180				
9 06 CSU	39 275	17.8	6 972		21.7	21.7 0.0 1:	1 810 1:	32				
36 07 CU	50 429	30.7	15 465	7.0	0.8	7.8 0.0 1:	6 465 1:	1 983				
31 08 DEAKIN	49 185	15.8	7 753		11.2	11.2 0.0 1:	4 392 1:	692				
10 09 ECU	26 692	19.9	3 965		14.0	14.0 0.0 1:	1 907 1:	283				
24 11 FLINDERS	24 293	17.0	4 131	7.6	7.6	0.0 1:	3 196 1:	544				
12 23 GRIFFITH	45 296	20.5	9 277	3.0	12.4	15.4 1.0 1:	2 941 1:	605				
16 13 JCU	22 251	32.2	7 164		8.9	8.9 -1.6 1:	2 500 1:	800				
18 14 LATROBE	35 081	22.5	7 907	13.4		13.4 -1.8 1:	2 618 1:	590				
28 15 MACQUARIE	39 637	23.3	9 234	5.7	5.0	10.7 3.3 1:	3 704 1:	863				
18 16 MONASH	67 076	35.8	23 981	8.1	20.0	28.1 0.0 1:	2 387 1:	853				
4 17 MURDOCH	24 137	41.9	10 124	19.0		19.0 0.0 1:	1 270 1:	533				
2 18 QUT	47 218	16.9	7 983	1.0	40.3	41.3 0.0 1:	1 143 1:	193				
34 19 RMIT	59 213	45.2	26 761	9.0	3.3	12.3 0.0 1:	4 814 1:	2 175				
11 20 SCU	14 484	13.2	1 914	6.5		6.5 0.0 1:	2 228 1:	294				
35 21 SWINBURNE	34 609	25.4	8 786	6.8		6.8 0.0 1:	5 090 1:	1 292				
17 22 U ADELAIDE	27 167	26.8	7 273	4.0	6.5	10.5 0.0 1:	2 587 1:	695				
14 23 U CANBERRA	16 920	25.0	4 234		7.0	7.0 0.0 1:	2 417 1:	603				
33 24 U MELBOURNE	59 596	27.1	16 159	2.0	10.4	12.4 0.0 1:	4 806 1:	1 303				
19 25 UNE	21 415	4.6	979	8.9		8.9 0.0 1:	2 420 1:	11				
37 26 UNSW	53 481	25.5	13 633	1.0	7.1	8.1 0.0 1:	6 603 1:	1 683				
1 26 1 UNSW-Canberra	3 100	6.6	205	3.0		3.0 0.0 1:	1 033 1:	68				
29 27 U NEWCASTLE	37 414	15.2	5 696		9.0	9.0 0.0 1:	4 157 1:	636				
32 28 U NOTRE DAME	11 849	2.4	281	2.6		2.6 0.0 1:	4 557 1:	106				
40 29 UQ	50 749	24.0	12 195		6.2	6.2 0.6 1:	8 185 1:	1 967				
19 30 UNISA	31 962	19.6	6 257	12.0		12.0 -2.0 1:	2 664 1:	52				
22 31 UQ	27 460	17.6	4 845	7.3	2.4	9.7 0.0 1:	2 831 1:	496				
38 32 U SYDNEY	55 975	24.8	13 908	7.3	0.6	9.0 0.0 1:	7 085 1:	1 779				
27 33 UTS	29 232	16.3	4 779	5.8	2.0	7.8 0.0 1:	3 748 1:	613				
21 34 UTS	39 032	27.5	10 748	7.0	7.0	14.0 0.0 1:	2 788 1:	768				
12 35 USC	11 629	13.1	1 519		4.9	4.9 0.0 1:	2 373 1:	310				
30 36 UWA	26 379	19.8	5 218		6.2	6.2 0.0 1:	4 255 1:	842				
25 37 UWS	43 885	10.7	4 706	3.6	8.4	12.0 0.0 1:	3 657 1:	392				
20 38 UwT	31 395	42.0	13 189	10.4	1.0	11.4 0.0 1:	2 754 1:	1 157				
7 39 VU	27 904	36.7	10 228	18.5		18.5 0.0 1:	1 508 1:	555				
39 40 FEDERATION U	14 221	47.9	6 812		1.8	1.8 0.0 1:	7 901 1:	3 784				

**Academic Language & Learning centre/unit activities - Australian universities 2013**

University	a. centralised	b. decentralised	c. integrated credit	d. integrated non-credit	e. generic credit	f. generic non-credit	g. support for research Ss	h. 1:1	i. educational development	j. research active staff	k. ESL tuition #	l. diagnostic assessment #
1 Australian Catholic U ^ *	•			•		•	•	•		•		
2 Australian National U ^ *	•	•	•			•			•			
3 Bond U ^ *	•					•	•					•
4 Central Queensland U *	•					•			•			
5 Charles Darwin U ^ *	•		•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•
6 Charles Sturt U ^ *	•			•			•		•			•
7 Curtin U ^ *	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•		•
8 Deakin U ^ *	•					•	•		•			•
9 Edith Cowan U ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•			•
10 Flinders U *	•					•	•			•		
11 Griffith U ^ *	•		•	•			•	•	•		•	•
12 James Cook U ^ *	•			•			•		•	•	•	•
13 La Trobe U ^ *	•	•			•	•	•		•			•
14 Macquarie U *	•	•	•	•		•	•		•			•
15 Monash U ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•			•
16 Murdoch U *	•						•		•			•
17 Qld U Technology ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
18 RMIT U ^ *	•	•	•	•		•	•		•			•
19 Southern Cross U ^ *	•					•			•	•		•
20 Swinburne U ^ *	•			•					•			•
21 U Adelaide ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
22 U Ballarat *	•	•		•		•			•	•	•	•
23 U Canberra ^ *	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•	•	
24 U Melbourne ^ *	•	•	•	•	•		•		•			•
25 U New England ^ *	•	•	•	•		•	•		•			•
26 U New South Wales ^ *	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•			•
UNSW C'berra (ADFA) ^ *	•	•		•	•	•	•	•				•
27 U Newcastle ^ *	•					•	•				•	
28 U Notre Dame *	•						•					•
29 U Queensland ^ *	•		•	•		•	•					•
30 U South Australia ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
31 U Southern Qld ^ *	•			•			•	•	•			•
32 U Sydney ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•
33 U Tasmania ^ *	•			•		•				•		•
34 U Technology, Sydney ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•
35 U Sunshine Coast ^ *	•			•		•	•		•	•	•	•
36 U Western Australia ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•
37 U Western Sydney ^ *	•					•	•		•			•
38 U Wollongong ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
39 Victoria U ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
2008	39	14	13	26	13	28	30	38	26	28	16	18
2010	39	18	19	33	14	37	32	38	32	29	23	25
2013	37	19	21	35	14	39	35	38	32	35	23	27

<sup>a</sup> participated in 2007 ALL benchmarking project. (Dearlove et al., 2007)

What might  
we be?

**A serious and responsive community that:**

Embraces technology to offer our institutions scalable but contextualised student development

Recognises the value of our data and intelligence on students, and makes it useful to our institutions

Uses data to identify and develop efficient, effective and collaborative initiatives

Sees unbundling as an opportunity and a threat for staff and students