

# The Project

*“I have a better sense of myself as a leader than I did before this project. I really wasn't sure I could be a leader whereas now I know what attributes I have. I have a sense of what skills I need to continue to develop to be a good leader and I have an appreciation that leadership is not necessarily about the position you hold, or your personal achievements. ... leadership is about finding ways of bringing about sustainable enduring change ... to make teaching, learning and student assessment more effective.” (2007 Scholar)*

Managing change and leading institutions in new directions can no longer be supported strategically by a hierarchical leadership organisation that supports the notion of heroes or born leaders. There is a need to foster and support a distributive perspective of leadership capacity development that incorporates the collegial sharing of knowledge, practice and reflection.

According to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2002), a range of challenges have arisen over the past decade due to the dramatic changes that have occurred across the university environment. These changes will have a major impact on the way in which universities are governed and managed in the future.

This project addresses the need for system wide development of leadership for teaching and learning. It provides a framework for the development of individuals' leadership capacity across multiple levels of the university and explores an innovative process for development that focuses on a community of practice and individuals working collegially and collaboratively within this community to improve learning and teaching. It moves from notions of leader as individual to leader as first amongst peers, acknowledging the ability of people at many levels to take leadership for different aspects of teaching and learning (Knight & Trowler, 2001).

The project design included two stages: the development and implementation stage, and the cascade stage, with an iterative evaluation process to support ongoing improvements.

## Stage 1: Development and Implementation

In the development phase, each university identified participants to engage in the project. A significant financial contribution per scholar was made by each university to reduce the scholar's workload.

Initially scholars came together for a three-day residential leadership retreat designed to: enable them to develop collegial relationships; formulate and discuss aspects of their authentic learning task related to assessment; and participate in leadership training.

Scholars led the implementation of an authentic-learning project in their faculty. At the same time engaging in: institutional and cross-institutional communication and collaboration; strategic leadership mentoring and coaching; and reflection. As part of the reflective focus the scholars were encouraged to maintain a reflective journal and participate in a cross-institutional online collaborative space.

At the end of the implementation phase, the scholars organised and facilitated a national roundtable. This focused on assessment and was related to their faculty-based project. It involved academic staff from their own and other universities, leaders in the field identified through professional associations. It included invited participants from other universities who indicated an interest in participating in the next stage of the project.

This stage culminated in the refinement of the LCDF that would be implemented in the next stage, following an extensive evaluation that included both formative and summative evaluation activities.

# GREEN

## Stage 2: Cascade

In this stage the first generation participants acted as key supporters for the second generation participants through the provision of mentoring.

The participants from each inaugural university mentored and supported the implementation of the modified LCDF in two partner universities. This second stage of the program continued to evaluate and validate the LCDF.



Figure1. Project Context

DOMAIN	THEORY	ACTIVITY & LEVEL
GROWING	Social Constructivism	<b>Individual:</b> Scholars developed an understanding of self as leader.  <b>Institutional/Cross-institutional:</b> Scholars developed an understanding of the social and cultural context of leadership in higher education.
REFLECTING	Social Constructivism	<b>Individual:</b> Scholars developed greater understanding of self in leadership.  <b>Institutional/Cross-institutional:</b> Scholars developed understanding of self in leadership and the social and cultural context of leadership in higher education, through dialogue with colleagues.
ENABLING	Authentic and Situational Learning	<b>Individual:</b> Scholars developed leadership skills through leading a faculty-based project.  <b>Faculty:</b> Scholars gained an understanding of leadership in higher education through the practice of leading.  <b>International/National, Institutional/Cross-institutional:</b> Scholars developed leadership through their experience of organising a national roundtable.
ENGAGING	Communities of Practice Social Constructivism	<b>International/National, Institutional/Cross-institutional:</b> Scholars developed greater understanding of leadership roles and responsibilities for higher education.
NETWORKING	Communities of Practice	<b>Individual:</b> Scholars extended their personal networks.  <b>Faculty/ Institutional:</b> Scholars led change through innovative practice in assessment.  <b>International/National, Institutional/Cross-institutional:</b> Scholars engaged in activities and embraced opportunities to extend their current networks through organisation of national roundtable.

## Aim

### The aims of the project include:

- To develop and trial a leadership capacity development framework for teaching and learning that will be available across the sector.
- To develop cross-institutional networks to support the adoption and adaptation of this leadership framework for multiple contexts.
- To develop resources to support this framework that will be available and accessible to all institutions.

## Outcomes

### Three overarching outcomes were addressed through this project:

- A framework to support capacity development for leadership in higher education.
- Creation of learning and changed practice within the cross-institutional teams.
- Research to feed into the policy and theories of academic development.

The distributive leadership project has ethics approval from University of Wollongong, Ethics Number HE06/356.