

Academic Leadership Capabilities for Australian Higher Education LI61

Interim Progress Report December 2006

Partner Institutions

University of Western Sydney (UWS)
Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

Project Commencement: 30 May 2006

Project Completion: 30 May 2008

Project Outcome

The project will advance the development of effective leadership in Australian Higher Education. It will produce:

- an empirically validated leadership capability framework for learning and teaching;
- an evidence-based profile of effective leaders in various higher education learning and teaching roles;
- targeted resources and strategies for using the outcomes;
- specific guidelines on what approaches optimise leadership learning in higher education roles like those studied.

Project Activities and Achievements to December 2006

A national steering committee and representative reference group from a wide range of universities were established to guide the project, and to provide advice on conceptual, methodological and implementation issues. There has been regular communication with these two groups as the project has developed.

Project implementation has included a comprehensive review of the empirical literature on effective leadership in higher education. The literature review and a pilot survey were used to identify and clarify concepts and perceptions of leadership capabilities in higher education and to re-calibrate the survey used in previous school leadership research. This was followed by the development of the online survey of academic leaders, which was subject to a rigorous review process.

Twenty Australian universities have agreed to participate in the project. Over 1,200 academic leaders who occupy a range of Learning and Teaching leadership roles from DVC to Head of Program in the participating universities were surveyed in October and November 2006. There has been a good response rate from the survey of over 42%. A follow-up to the survey is underway with a target of achieving at least a 50% response rate. Importantly, the response sample already aligns with the overall population surveyed. Quantitative and qualitative data from the first round of the survey is currently being collated and analysed.

In December 2006 and January 2007, Project Director Professor Geoff Scott undertook a range of site visits to peak bodies and universities in South Africa, the UK and in Canada. In the UK the project was reviewed with the CEO of the UK Foundation for Higher Education Leadership. In South Africa meetings were held with HE South Africa, the South African HE Council and leaders from a range of universities. In Canada the project was reviewed by leaders from Dalhousie University, the University of Ottawa, Carleton University and the University of Toronto. The focus of this international benchmarking

was on the project's conceptual foundations, methodology and practical implications. As an outcome, the project has been endorsed in terms of its focus, significance and methodology in all three countries, with a range of useful enhancements and links established. Key peak groups and higher education leaders in all three countries have now indicated their interest in participating as international partners in the workshops which review the results and identify their key implications.

A meeting on the project was also held with Professor Michael Fullan in Toronto, Canada in January 2007. Professor Fullan is an international figure in leadership of change in education and continues to be a pro-bono international reviewer of the project.

Emeritus Professor Brian Low, the Carrick evaluator for the project, has been involved at all stages and has endorsed the progress being made.

The project is on track against its timeline for completion in early 2008. Future phases of the project include:

1. Analysis of the results
2. Writing up draft findings
3. Organising and conducting a series of national workshops to discuss the findings and their implications.
4. Development of project outcomes including a major report, practical resources for leadership development and a number of short publications on the results.

Professor Geoff Scott
Project Director