An Australian Association for Academic Developers: Concept testing

CAULLT 2018 grant

Project Report

## Project Team

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*with*

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Project Web site: www.advancingacademicdevelopment.net

## The Practice Problem

The proposed project was designed to provide an initial organised opportunity for networking and professional development of Australian Academic Developers (ADs), and scope out potential for an ongoing network to facilitate these activities

## The Significance of the Problem

The Advancing Academic Development project was initiated in recognition that, in Australia, there is currently no systematic professional development offered to Academic Developers (ADs) and no organisation of ADs, such as operates to support developers in the United Kingdom or North America. Professional development of ADs in Australia depends primarily on the initiative and effort of individual Developers, who must seek out and create their own professional development opportunities and networks. As a consequence, professional development experiences are varied and sometimes piecemeal and, because they are individually constructed, they are not benchmarked, and nor are they usually designed to meet objective professional standards.

## Background

Recent research supported by the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD) showed a very high degree of interest (95%) amongst ADs for a "nationally run formal professional learning program" [Hill, 2016]. Currently however, Australia has no dedicated body representing the specific interests of ADs in higher education. There are, of course, a range of professional bodies that ADs might join as members (for example HERDSA or TELedvisors). And some of these have formed special interest groups (SIGs) and held pre-conference workshops for ADs (for example at the 2016 HERDSA conference). Formal postgraduate courses, as outlined by [Skead, 2018], are a potential model for professional development for ADs. However, both they, and pre-conference workshops, have focussed on development for new or emerging ADs. Nationally HERDSA, and internationally Advance HE's Higher Education Academy (HEA) and Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), offer formal fellowship schemes for academic developers [Bostock & Baume, 2016], but these are primarily focused on recognition rather than capability building and networking. Moreover, such organisations have a much wider remit and membership, and none quite meet the demand for specific professional development and networking opportunities for Australian ADs. Where, then, do new and experienced ADs meet, deepen their expertise, share their insights, and be recognised for their achievements? Informal personal professional networking and contact with peers, and attending large broadly focused conferences has primarily been the approach to date.

Internationally, dedicated AD organisations do exist. Of note is the UK's SEDA organisation, which is specifically focussed on academic development and claims to be "the shaper of thought and initiator of action in staff and educational development, not only in the UK but in the international domain" [SEDA, 2018].

## Project Aim

This project was initiated to establish potential demand and support for Australian facilitated professional development activities and a network of ADs, as well as to provide an initial organised event. Building on work undertaken by CADAD [Hill, 2016],  this project set out to ascertain what system of ongoing networking and organisation would be most supported by the relevant stakeholders (for example, formal independent conferencing and publishing (similar to ASCILITE or STARS); incorporation of a special interest group into a larger, more general conference (such as HERDSA); affiliation with an international organisation (such as SEDA); occasional webinars/ online meetings; or a dedicated annual national event etc.). That is, would Australian ADs as a community want to commit to an international provider, align themselves to it, or go it alone through the formation of a networked organisation or regular event for Academic Developers? And if so, would their universities support this? Further questions include how 'formal' such professional development should be, and for whom it should be offered. The project also considered the form that such professional development, networking and recognition might take to ensure buy in, and optimise opportunities for networking, professional development and sharing and recognising good practices.

## Key Project Objectives

The project therefore focussed on two key objectives:

1. Facilitate a networking meeting of Australian ADs, with embedded components of professional development as an experimental test case; and
2. Ascertain support for ongoing networking/organisation and canvas the Academic Development community, and University Leaders of Learning and Teaching via CAULLT for a potential structure that could be supported in an ongoing fashion.

## Approach

Given the short time frame of the grant (1 year), both of these objectives were pursued simultaneously. The first involved designing, planning, and conducting an innovative national event to test and evaluate a new facilitated model and capturing the outcomes. The latter set out to

investigate what level and kinds of networking and organisation would be most supported by the relevant stakeholders and to this end, two surveys were conducted–one of Academic Developers and another of University Leaders.

This report now outlines the achievement of these two objectives through this two-pronged approach.

# Objective 1. Achieved.

> Facilitate a networking meeting of Australian Academic Developers, with embedded components of professional development.

Objective 1 was achieved through two key strategies:

- Advancing Academic Development (AAD) Event

- Good Practice Awards

## Advancing Academic Development (AAD) Event

The networking meeting of Australian Academic Developers was conceptualised as a one-day event, timed as a pre-event for the CAULLT conference. The **Advancing Academic Development Event** was held on **7th November, 2018** at **Bond University, Gold Coast**. The program for the day was developed with a focus on the theme of Academic Development with an International keynote speaker Dr Kathryn Sutherland, Co-editor of the International Journal for Academic Development presenting An International Perspective on Academic Development, and National Keynote: Professor Suzi Derbyshire, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Learning and Teaching, presenting on The Value of Academic Development for Universities and the Sector (see Appendix A). A series of professional development workshops included a Progression of Partial Solutions (POPS) interactive problem-solving activity and a Scholarship of Learning and Teaching strategic workshop. Networking opportunities were afforded through these collaborative events as well as morning and afternoon tea and over lunch. As detailed below, ten Good Practice Award Finalists from across Australian universities presented as a means of sharing good practice. Reflections by these participants were also captured on video.

## Australasian Good Practice Awards

Noting the lack of recognition available for good practice through academic development, it was decided to value-add to the event with the introduction of a recognition/award system as a stretch goal for the project. The **2018 Australasian Academic Development Good Practice Awards** sought to identify leaders and innovators in academic development by sharing and recognising good practice for Academic Development across the dimensions of teaching, learning, and scholarship.

The recognition/award system was designed to embody professional development in its very process, that is, applicants would need to reflect on their innovation, impact and practice in:

- writing up their nomination in the form of a structured abstract;
- developing their Pecha Kucha presentation for the national event (if a finalist);
- identifying and articulating the value of the awards process when creating a video, and
- experiencing and learning from one day attendance at the CAULLT conference.

DVCAs of all Australasian Universities were invited to nominate their Academic Development staff to submit an abstract for consideration for the Good Practice Awards. The project team and CAULLT liaison reviewed all applications for their alignment with the criteria, individually rating each application and then had a meeting to collaboratively calibrate the ranking of the applications and collate all feedback.

Criteria for Awards were communicated in the submission process as follows:

1) Principles of good learning and teaching

Clear principles of good learning and teaching are addressed by your good practice, including a well-reasoned driver/rationale/ 'why' of the academic development at the heart of the nomination.

2) Scholarship

The scholarship (reference to literature/ precedents in practice) underpinning the good practice is succinctly explained and justified and related to its innovation and intent.

3) Impact

The scale and reach of your good practice are outlined, and evidence of its value, impact, and influence on the learning and teaching practice of others is provided.

All applicants were notified of the outcome of their applications and were provided with the collated, constructive feedback from the project team. Ten Finalists were then invited to share their good practice through the mode of a PechaKucha at the AAD event. On the day, a panel consisting of two of the project team, along with (IJAD representative) Kathryn Sutherland and (HERDSA representative) Allan Goody, made up the judges to assess the presentations.

Each finalist was also provided with an enriched professional development opportunity in the form of a recorded reflective video session, which saw them considering and responding to questions about their perceptions of the value of Academic Development to their universities; what they consider to be the key principles of good practice in Academic Development and the value of participation in reflecting on and presenting their good practice and the awards to them as an Academic Developer. The videos captured rich data and have been professionally edited and produced into an artefact that was gifted to each finalist. The videos have also been uploaded into a website that can be linked from the CAULLT webpage, contributing engaging resources about award winning good practice across Australasia.

Further, Finalists were afforded a further enrichment opportunity, through an invitation to attend the first day of the November 2018 CAULLT conference and to listen to key note speakers, network with national Learning leaders and participate in activities. Award Winners and finalists with Distinctions were invited to present their initiatives again at this event. Another benefit of this initiative was that of introducing CAULLT more broadly to colleagues in the sector, ensuring visibility, and enabling a line of succession towards CAULLT membership. Feedback from finalists indicated that they appreciated this opportunity to meet leaders in learning and teaching from other institutions, and to gain the sector perspectives afforded by CAULLT.

## Consultation

During the planning phase for the event, the project team consulted with their CAULLT liaison, Mr Glen O'Grady, as well as with Dr Allan Goody (President of HERDSA, Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia), the HERDSA Academic Development Special Interest Group and with Mr Colin Simpson, TELedvisors network Co-convenor.

## Communication and promotion

Notice about the event and the associated Good Practice Awards was disseminated through: invitations to each DVCA of Australian and New Zealand universities; and notices through the HERDSA weekly e-bulletin, the TELedvisors web list, the HERDSA SIG Facebook page and creating an event on this page, a new website for the AAD event, and the CAULLT web notices.

## Participation

The AAD event attracted 48 registrations (given the experimental nature of this inaugural event we initially limited the invitation to one representative of each institution plus the ten finalists). With a relatively short lead time, the AAD Good Practice Awards received 27 nominations including two

from New Zealand. The event engaged 20 universities (refer to Table 1), along with strategic organisations, suggesting a need for both the event and the good practice awards.

Table 1. List of participating universities.

| | |
|---|---|
| Bond University | Swinburne University of Technology |
| Charles Darwin University | University of Newcastle |
| Griffith University | University of New South Wales |
| HERDSA | University of Otago, NZ |
| James Cook University | University of Southern Queensland |
| La Trobe University | University of Tasmania |
| Massey University, NZ | University of Technology |
| Monash University | University of Wollongong |
| Murdoch University | Victoria University |
| QUT | Victoria University of Wellington, NZ |
| Southern Cross University | |

## Advancing Academic Development (AAD) Event Evaluation

Evaluations included questions delivered by survey with a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree/ agree/unsure / disagree /strongly disagree = 5), with 100% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that the event provided a positive opportunity to develop their academic network, and learning about/ from the good practice of peers. 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the event enabled them to "Reflect upon the challenges and opportunities faced by academic developers across the sector"; and a similar proportion responded that the event enabled them to "Be proud of the work I do as an academic developer".

### Reflections on the AAD Program and Awards



Legend:
- Academic Network
- Learn Good Practice
- Reflect on Challenges
- Be Proud of Work
- Gain Understanding of Potential

Representative qualitative feedback included:

Was great to see the practice examples.

Thank you so much for the wonderful opportunity to participate in the event. It was extremely interesting and enjoyable for us all. What wonderful work and professional videos!

We felt so privileged to be invited, and really surprised and elated to have our program validated by our peers.

Your initiation has brought a significant event to the field/discipline 50 years into its history. It is a joy to know that there is something to strive for in terms of national recognition. … [a] wonderful initiative. I wish you every success in making it an ongoing, self-sustaining award.

I appreciate the opportunity to showcase my work.  I am really happy I did it and am delighted with the trophy that has pride of place on my desk.

It was a really valuable experience, and I learned so much from my fellow Good Practice nominees, and the experienced Academic Developers at both events.

## Outputs

Initially a web page was developed on the UTAS web site, then following the event a dedicated web site for the project was created to house information about, artefacts of the Advancing Academic Development Event and Awards, and research outputs. This includes the Finalists' presentations and reflections (produced and shared with permission of presenters). These were professionally edited into a series of short Good Practice Videos for online dissemination. Other resources available on the project web site include Keynote presentation and workshop materials. The web site will also incrementally house research outcomes produced by the project team from the project. And, straddling this project and the subsequent CAULLT funded project that builds upon it, the web site will serve to promote the next event, and provide information for attendees and Good Practice nominees.

The project team are presenting on this initiative in May:

Hamilton, J.G., Adams, A. & Harvey, M. (2019). *Facilitating qualitative research in higher education through the strategic recognition of good practice*. Presentation at the 17th Qualitative Methods (QM) Conference. 1-3 May, Brisbane.

Publications will also be submitted in due course.

**Project Web site: www.advancingacademicdevelopment.net**

## Objective 2. Achieved.

> Ascertain support for ongoing networking/organisation and canvas the Academic Development community, and University Leaders of Learning and Teaching via CAULLT for a potential structure that could be supported in an ongoing fashion.

We started to work towards the second objective by firstly reaching an agreement on how we would define, or describe, academic development:

*Academic development has a focus on good practice and on enhancing practice for all the dimensions of teaching, learning and scholarship. Academic development aims to develop teaching, curriculum, and leadership of teaching so as to, in turn, support high quality student learning. Higher education staff who support academic development may be referred to as academic, educational or professional developers.*[1]

Mårtensson, K. (2014). *Influencing teaching and learning microcultures: Academic development in a research-intensive university* (PhD thesis; p.17). Lund University.

Mukerji, S. & Tripathi, P. (Eds.) (2017). *Handbook of research on administration, policy, and leadership in higher education.* Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

https://www.seda.ac.uk/about

To be able to identify out what opportunities for networking, and professional learning and development are currently available for academic developers in Australia and New Zealand, as well as to ascertain what national or international initiatives or forms of professional development might be considered useful and valuable by Academic Developers, and supported by university leaders into the future, we decide to survey colleagues.

Two surveys were developed:

- Academic Developer Survey

- Leaders Survey

The surveys were founded on the original work by Angela Hill and her *Survey of Professional Development Needs of Academic Developers.*

## Phase 1. September - November 2018

### Academic Developer Survey

Survey links were disseminated at the AAD event resulting in 13 responses on the day and an extra 5 after the event (18 responses). As we needed additional responses it was decided to plan for a second phase of data collection.

### Leaders Survey

Survey invitations and links were sent to DVCAs in September (48 Australian and NZ institutions) resulting in 3 responses (a 6.25% response rate), and an additional 3 responses in November, coinciding with the AAD event.

## Phase 2. March -April 2019

### Academic Developer Survey

A reminder about the survey was disseminated in March, resulting in a further 28 responses.

### Leaders Survey

The March survey reminder, to DVCAs and Directors of Learning and Teaching, resulted in an additional 6 responses.

## Survey results

A total of 46 Academic Developer and 12 Leaders surveys have been received as of the first week of April. Analysis then began on the data received. Key insights are emerging about Academic Developers perceptions on

- Key job tasks
- Most valuable professional development
- Budget allocation
- Professional currency
- Impact and value of academic development
- Importance of academic development work

Key findings from the surveys will be presented at the April 2019 CAULLT meeting and when analysis and findings are finalised they will be disseminated through a journal publication.

# Project Budget

Through the generous support of Bond University, negotiated by Dr Sarah Long, the venues and audio support for the AAD event were provided to the project as support-in-kind. Through the generous support of QUT, administrative support for the event and videography was provided.

Supporting an AAD event can be achieved at a baseline cost of $6,000 (combining keynotes, administration, trophies and catering and assuming no venue costs).

The cost of Video production and web site production would be higher than the in-kind totals below ($4015 and $2100 respectively) if not an inhouse production.

## Original Budget

| Item | Forecast | Expenditure |
|---|---|---|
| Networking Meeting - (e.g., UNSW CBD campus Conference room, 10am–4pm) Venue hire (Harvard-style room) | | |
| *(used for International keynote & speaker gifts)* | $1,300 | $1,050 |
| Catering (50 attendees @ $50pp) | $2,500 | $2,750 |
| Material costs and equipment hire (*trophies*) | $1,000 | $798 |
| Scoping - Research Assistance, Level 1 | $5,000 | $5,000 |
|     20 hours preparation | | |
|     30 hours data collection interviews | | |
|     50 hours analysis @ $42.89/hr + on-costs = $4,995.81 | | |
| Transcription | $200 | $400 |
| **Total** | **$10,000** | **$9,998** |

## In-kind support from participating universities

| Support | Institution | Investment |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-production x 11 hours | QUT | $605 |
| Videography x 24 hours | | $1,320 |
| Editing x 28 hours | | $1,540 |
| Feedback, re-editing and delivery x 10 hours | | $550 |
| Website development x 30 hours | UTAS, QUT | $2,100 |
| Venue Hire with audio technical support | Bond University | $1,500 |
| Academic support | UTAS, QUT, UNSW | $23,874 |
| 3 x academics at 0.1 x 26 weeks (averaged) | | |
| Professional support | QUT | $1,555 |
| 1 x HEW 5 x 28 hours x $55.55 | | |
| | **Total** | **$33,044** |

# Summary and recommendations

## Key findings

**Engaging university executive in data collection**, such as the survey about Academic Development, **is a challenging task**. Following individual invitations to DVCAs (or equivalent) across all Australian and New Zealand universities, few respondents replied. In contrast, the invitations to this cohort to invite their staff to nominate for the Australasian Good Practice awards for Academic Development saw the effective dissemination of invitations cascade down through their organisations. Our observation is that **national recognition of good practice is valued** by universities.

**In-kind support** from the team's universities together with support from the CAULLT host university enabled the project to value-add to the outcomes, for example, the creation of video artefacts and the invitation of an international keynote.

Clearly **positioning this as an Australasian project** resulted in the achievement of engagement from both Australian and New Zealand universities.

The finalists of the AAD awards clearly identified the impact that the conferment of this status afforded them and their institution, for example, the national winner disseminated their achievement through Campus Morning Mail and the University of Wollongong newsletter. All finalists clearly articulated the impact through their video stories.

## Recommendations

The recommendations arising from the CAULLT project *An Australian Association for Academic Developers: Concept testing* are presented as:

1. **Offer a one-day Advancing Academic Development (AAD) event**

The project has identified a need for focussed professional development for academic developers across the Australasian sector. This event can address this need. Continuous quality enhancement of event will further strengthen its standing. The event should be open to all ADs as attendees.

2. **Align the AAD event with the CAULLT conference**

Alignment and collaboration can raise the awareness of the role and leadership of CAULLT across the Australasian sector, and can aid with a through-line of progression from AD to Learning leader.

### 3. Offer Advancing Academic Development Good Practice Awards

University executive were most engaged in supporting their staff to apply for Australasian recognition. The project had identified a gap in recognition schemes for academic development good practice. Continuous quality enhancement of the process, for example, ongoing refinement of award criteria is required.

### 4. Disseminate the outcomes of the project to the sector.

Development of a site, clearly linked to the CAULLT website, to locate the outcomes will enable the sharing of academic development good practice. For example, the videos of the finalists' presentations, and conference presentations offer an enduring and accessible resource for ADs. Dissemination should be strategically carried out through outlets such as TELedvisors, HERDSA.

### 5. Explore future collaborations and sponsorship possibilities.

Future collaborations are being explored with UniSuper and with HERDSA. Sponsorship will enable the awards and event to be more sustainable.

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**Appendix A. AAD program**

*Academic development has a focus on good practice and on enhancing practice for all the dimensions of teaching, learning and scholarship and aims to develop teaching, curriculum, and leadership of teaching so as to, in turn, support high quality student learning.* Mårtensson. (2014); Mukerji & Tripathi, P. (2017)

# Advancing Academic Development Event PROGRAM

**Wednesday, 7th November, 2018**
**Building 6 & Basil Sellers Foyer, Bond University**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9.30 | Registration | |
| 10.00 | Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Bond University | |
| | Professor Keitha Dunstan, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Bond University | |
| 10.10 | Welcome to the Advancing Academic Development Event | |
| 10.20 | Australasian Keynote: Dr Kathryn Sutherland | |
| | An international perspective on Academic Development | |
| 10.50 | National Keynote: Professor Suzi Derbyshire | |
| | The value of Academic Development for universities and the sector | |
| 11.20 | Question and answer session | |
| 11.30 | Morning tea | |
| 11.50 | Presentations of good practice PechaKuchas: The Australasian finalists | |
| | Please turn over for a full list of finalists | |
| 1.30 | Lunch | |
| | Parallel sessions: | |
| 2.15 Session 1 | **Level 4, Seminar 6** | **Level 4, Seminar 1** |
| | Progression of Partial Solutions (POPs) | Reflections and Q & A with good practice finalists (1-5) |
| | *Issues, challenges and success for the future of Academic Development* | *Principles, practices, and value of good Academic Development practice* |
| 3.00 | Transition to parallel session via afternoon tea | |
| | **Level 4 Seminar 6** | **Level 4, Seminar 1** |
| 3.10 Session 2 | Academic Development & SoTL | Reflections and Q & A with good practice finalists (6-10) |
| | *Professional Development workshop* | *Principles, practices and value of good Academic Development practice* |
| 4.00-4.10 | A research update: Advancing Academic Development | |
| | Research contribution: Advancing Academic Development survey | |
| 4.30 | Inaugural Australasian Academic Development Advancement Award presentation | |
| | Finalists and winners announced: Professor Kevin Ashford-Rowe, CAULLT President | |
| 5.00 | Close | |

**Appendix B. Good Practice Finalists**

**Elevating Academic Development in a Bachelor of Nursing Course Transformation**

Sharon Altena, QUT

**Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching MOOC**

Kym Fraser (with Linden Clarke, Yoni Ryan, Natalie Brown, Peter Copeman, Caroline Cottman, Marie Fisher, Julie Fleming, Tracy Frayne, Ann Luzeckyj, Kogi Naidoo, Beatrice Tucker, Sue Bolt, Coralie McCormack), Swinburne and partner Universities:

**Education Focussed Career Support**

Vanessa Fredericks, University of New South Wales

**Teaching in an Australian Context**

Michelle Fox, QUT:

**Jindaola**

Jade Kennedy and Alisa Percy (with Lisa Thomas, Bonnie Dean, Janine Delahunty, Kathryn Harden-Thew, Julie Avena, Paul Chandler, Maarten de Laat), University of Wollongong:

**Foundations of University Learning and Teaching**

Sarah Long and Anne Trethewey, Bond University

**Course Design Studios**

Trish Maynard, QUT

**VU Block Model**

Trish McCluskey, Connected Learning Team, Victoria University

**A University Program of Professional Development for Casual Academics**

Nicola Parker, University of Technology Sydney

**Peer Professional Learning Program for Awards**

Melody West, The PPLP for Awards Team, University of Tasmania