REPORT ON THE 2ND NATIONAL WORKSHOP, THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND, NOVEMBER 26-27 2001

Identifying and Supporting Effective Methods of Enhancing Learning - Teaching Large Classes

The second of two national workshops was convened on November 26-27 2001, with the majority of project participants in attendance. There were 38 highly accomplished teachers (HATs) and 22 Academic Development Unit staff (ADUs) from 21 universities. The workshop was run by a sub-committee of the project team; Denise Chalmers, Ron Weber, Doune Macdonald, Nan Bahr, Debra Herbert, and Rachel Hannam.

The aims of the workshop were to:

- Disseminate project findings, introduce new resources and obtain feedback on these resources;
- Create opportunities for participants to share information on university-based project activities;
- Share information and issues relating to university-based dissemination projects;
- Encourage participants to become ‘agents of change’ within their own institutions.

Workshop sessions

The workshop consisted of nine distinct sessions over the 2 days. Sessions for Day 1 were:

- Presentation by UQ project team of major findings – a summary of the project's activities and general findings from literature review and UQ survey;
- Presentation by UQ project team of AUTC project on Sessional Teaching (commencing 2002) – an overview of the project inviting expressions of interest from participants;
- Web-site launch by UQ project team – an overview of the draft version of the ‘Large Classes’ web-site;
- Concurrent presentations by Highly Accomplished Teachers from the University of Queensland and Queensland University of Technology. These sessions served to flag innovations in large course teaching and management and to obtain feedback from workshop participants on the draft guidelines (approximately 15 people per group). Issues addressed in these sessions were
  - Managing online
  - Managing Assessment
  - Tutor management
  - Computer lab session (to view Large Classes web-site);

Each session was run twice. Each participant attended two of the four sessions.

- A discussion was chaired by Ron Weber and led by Professor Rod O'Donnell (Macquarie University) on “Reflections on What We're Doing”.
- Invited speaker Professor Margaret Gardner (PVC) gave a presentation on “Flexible Delivery and Quality Assurance in Universities”.

Sessions for Day 2 were:

- Invited speaker Dr Linda Hort (Director CEDAM, ANU) led the discussion on "Managing Resources in Large Courses";

- Parallel sessions for university-based dissemination project teams - participants broke into 3 groups (approximately 7 universities were represented in each group) to report on completed and planned activities (ie. their use of the $1000 funding to support dissemination);

- Presentation by UQ project team on change management in universities.

Papers based on the workshop discussions have subsequently been provided by two of the invited speakers - "Managing and Resourcing Large Classes" by Dr Linda Hort and "Reflections on what we’re doing" by Professor Rod O'Donnell. These papers will become available via the Large Classes web-site at www.tedi.uq.edu.au/largeclasses later this year.

A workshop evaluation was sent to all participants in the week following the workshop and feedback was obtained for each of these sessions (see below).

University-based dissemination projects
Prior to the workshop, the contact person for each dissemination project was contacted and asked to provide a one-page description on what their university had achieved or planned to achieve in the near future in terms of dissemination. Upon arrival workshop participants received a copy of these as part of their materials package.

Each of the universities represented at the workshop presented a 10-15 minute report on their dissemination activities. Although participants only heard a sample of other dissemination projects (around 6-7), every participant received a description of all projects being conducted. Participants also had opportunities to discuss their university’s activities informally during the 2 days.

The universities reporting on dissemination projects were Australian Catholic University, Australian National University, Macquarie, Monash, Murdoch, University of New England, University of Melbourne, Deakin, University of NSW, University of Wollongong, University of Western Sydney, RMIT, University of Sydney, University of South Australia, University of Tasmania, Griffith University, QUT, Flinders, Edith Cowan and University of WA. These last 2 (Western Australian) universities conducted a cross-institutional dissemination project. All other institutions conducted university-based projects.

These sessions proved to be most useful to participants in sharing ideas and creating networks of expert teachers as evidenced by informal comments and evaluations data.

Workshop evaluations
All participants were emailed evaluation forms asking for comments and feedback about the workshop (see Appendix A). A total of 23 responses were received (39% response rate). Feedback was generally very positive with the majority of these respondents (87%) agreeing that their time was well spent at the workshop.

The majority of participants agreed that the workshop satisfied its stated objectives (see above) with approximately 80% or more of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that each purpose of the workshop was met.

Respondents generally agreed that the Day 1 sessions were worthwhile, with around 80% agreeing that the sessions were worthwhile, although there was less agreement about the suitability of the session on
flexible delivery and quality assurance.

The majority of participants agreed that the parallel sessions on Day 2 were very worthwhile (87%). Likewise, most respondents felt that the closing comments from the AUTC representative was beneficial (74%), however there was variable agreement on the usefulness of the other Day 2 sessions.

All respondents found the pre-workshop communication and organisation satisfactory or better (with 87% choosing very good or excellent). Just over 70% of respondents rated the workshop facilities and refreshments as very good or excellent.

Most people found the length of the workshop to be “just right”. Only two respondents felt that the workshop was “too short” and four rated it as “too long”. See Appendix B for a summary of responses to all of the above survey questions.

Participants were specifically asked to comment on any sessions they rated as “poor”. These comments have been collated and summarised for future use (see Appendix C). Participants were also asked to comment on particular strengths of the workshop. A number of the positive comments pertained to opportunities provided to participants to network and share ideas and strategies for teaching and disseminating best practice (see Appendix C). In addition, many of the participants provided informal positive comments and feedback by way of phone calls and e-mails.

Other feedback
The workshop also offered participants an opportunity to raise issues not directly addressed at the workshop. This was achieved by providing “Burning Issues” forms on which participants could write down their thoughts, ideas or concerns about large class teaching and deposit them in a box. These, along with all field and discussion notes ‘scribed’ by UQ project team members were collected and are in the process of being collated and summarised for inclusion on the web-site. This data will also be used to inform any future activities relating to this and other projects.

Prepared by:
Rachel Hannam and Debra Herbert
On behalf of the Project Team (Denise Chalmers, Associate Professor Doune MacDonald, Professor Ron Weber, Dr Nan Bahr, Professor Deborah Terry, Dr Ottmar Lipp, , Dr John McLean).

Appendix A  -  Workshop evaluation

1. Please indicate (with X) the degree to which the purposes of the workshop were met:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The purposes of the workshop were to:</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Disseminate project findings, introduce new resources and obtain feedback on these resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Create opportunities for participants to share information on university-based project activities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Share information and issues relating to university-based dissemination projects..</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Encourage participants to become ‘agents of change’ within their own institutions.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Please indicate the degree of your agreement with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Delivery:</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The workshop was appropriately structured.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2. “Major project findings” session (Debra Herbert) was worthwhile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. “Web-site preview” (Nan Bahr) was worthwhile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Concurrent sessions with guidelines (web-site and 3 case study speakers) were worthwhile</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The discussion on “Reflections on What We’re Doing” led by Professor Rod O’Donnell was worthwhile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. The session on Flexible Delivery and QA led by Professor Margaret Gardner was worthwhile.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The session on “Managing Resources” led by Dr Linda Hort was worthwhile.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The parallel sessions for sharing university-based dissemination projects were worthwhile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The session on ‘change management within universities’ (Doune Macdonald) was worthwhile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Carol Nicoll’s (AUTC) closing comments were relevant and worthwhile.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For any item you disagree with please tell us why.
3. Please rate (using X) the organisation and administration for this workshop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation and Administration:</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-workshop communication (e.g. notification, information about the venue, other pre-workshop information)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suitability of rooms and facilities for the workshop activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refreshments and lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For any item you rate as poor please tell us why.

4. Was the workshop:  
Too short? ______  Just right? _______  Too long? _______

Comments:

5. Overall, what is your assessment of this workshop out of 5 (1 = low, 5 = high)?

1 _____  2 _____  3 _____  4 _____  5 _____

6. Overall, do you think your time at this workshop was worthwhile?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 _____</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 _____</td>
<td>4 _____</td>
<td>5 _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. If you had any expectation of the workshop you thought would be addressed that were not, could you please describe these below.

8. Please comment on particular strengths of this workshop.

9. Any further comments.
### Appendix B - Summary of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1.1</th>
<th>1.2</th>
<th>1.3</th>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>2.1</th>
<th>2.2</th>
<th>2.3</th>
<th>2.4</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.6</th>
<th>2.7</th>
<th>2.8</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>2.10</th>
<th>3.1</th>
<th>3.2</th>
<th>3.3</th>
<th>4*</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Rating</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% who agreed</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = strongly disagree/very poor  
2 = disagree/poor  
3 = uncertain/average  
4 = agree/above average  
5 = strongly agree/excellent

*For this item

1 = too short  
2 = just right  
3 = too long

### Appendix C - Summary of comments (workshop evaluation)

**Q2. For any item you disagree with please tell us why.**

- The majority of comments related to participants’ disappointment that more time was not devoted to hearing about all of the dissemination projects being conducted at the various universities. A few people also felt that more time could have been spent reviewing the draft guidelines.

- Four respondents suggested that the session on flexible delivery and quality was not entirely appropriate for this workshop.

**Q4. Was the workshop too short, just right or too long? Comments:**

- Respondents mostly agreed that the workshop was ‘just right’. Those who rated it as too long remarked that they felt certain sessions (eg. flexible delivery and change management) were not necessary. Those who said it was too short noted that they would have liked to spend more time discussing dissemination projects, the draft guidelines and the web-site.

**Q7. If you had any expectation of the workshop you thought would be addressed that were not, could you please describe these below.**

- Many respondents expected more time would be allocated to discussing university-based dissemination projects. Some had hoped that certain of the more interesting ones would be presented to the whole group.
• A few respondents suggested the workshop could have been improved by having fewer presentations and more opportunities generally for discussion (such as the projects, guidelines, web-site etc).

• Some remarked that they expected more discussion about ‘campaigning’ for extra resources for large classes, but others noted that Carol Nicoll’s closing remarks made clear that this was not one of the projects’ aims.

Q8. Please comment on particular strengths of this workshop.

• Most of the responses in this section pertained to the opportunities created for participants to network and make valuable future contacts.

• Several mentioned the opportunity to hear about what other universities are doing (dissemination and other projects) and share ideas.

• Several respondents also remarked that the workshop was well-organised and that the team was professional and welcoming.

• Three people commended the workshop for foregrounding some of the political issues (such as resourcing large classes) as well as the willingness of the project team to allow such debate and discussion.

Q9. Any further comments.

• Again, several respondents remarked that the workshop was well-organised and that the team was professional and approachable.

• The comment was made that the workshop had inspired a few of the participants to prepare an application to develop a training and orientation program for tutors.

• A few respondents reiterated that the workshop could have been improved by having fewer presentations and more opportunities generally for discussion.

• An example of one of the many positive comments made about the workshop (and project in general):

  “A really great opportunity to find out where Higher Ed is heading. Linda Hort was very challenging (not just nice). The web-site demo was terrific! Thankyou for taking the approach you have; namely including the sector. Such a contrast to the other ‘expert’ driven projects. I hope you get many more as your approach to this has been a credit to you. I have loved being involved. The staff from my university have gained much from their participation and we have forged new and productive relationships as a result. I hope that your approach is duly recognised and appreciated by the sector” (workshop participant).