Peer Learning for Staff: Peer Partnerships for Academic Language and Learning Educators

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Peer observation of teaching practice is becoming increasingly common in higher education. The approach has been linked to enhanced teaching confidence and skill development, as well as improved collegial relationships. As such it represents an efficient and effective form of professional development, empowering educators and building supportive networks.

**This workshop will address:** the question of how peer observation might be used to support the professional development of ALL staff.

**It will address it by:** describing Peer Partnerships, a program that provides staff with opportunities to reflect on, discuss and improve their teaching. The workshop will provide reflections from ALL staff, who paired with colleagues in the library, on their experiences in the program. The workshop will explore the model of peer partnerships, including the underlying principles and action-research processes as well as the distributed leadership approach used to develop peer partnerships as a sustainable practice. Quantitative and qualitative results supporting the effectiveness of the program will be examined and the challenges of implementation, with particular reference to the ALL domain explored. Workshop participants will have access to a range of resources developed by the Peer Partnership team that can be adapted for implementation at other universities.

Dallas Wingrove (M Ed (Teaching); Grad Dip Ed, Grad Dip TESOL, BA Arts) is a Senior Research Fellow in the College of Design and Social Context at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. She has accumulated almost twenty years’ experience as an educator working across the Secondary, TAFE, Adult Migrant and Higher Education sectors. Dallas is committed to excellence in learning and teaching including through the delivery of needs based, sustainable professional development. Dallas has worked extensively in education to provide learning and teaching leadership for quality enhancement across diverse disciplines within the university’s three Colleges. She has also led research projects within RMIT to support the university’s research capability.

Dallas’s research interests include: peer partnerships, educational leadership, transnational education, change management, linguistics and discourse analysis.

Angela Clarke (M Ed (Teaching); B Ed) is a Senior Research Fellow in the College of Design and Social Context at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. She has accumulated almost twenty years’ experience as an educator and is committed to excellence in creativity education. Angela’s background is in drama and theatre education and she has worked extensively in
creative arts education to provide learning and teaching leadership amongst academics in creative disciplines. Angela is a singer/songwriter who leads a group of women musicians in the band *Luminate Ensemble*.

Angela’s research interests include: creativity education; embodied cognition; and educational leadership. She is currently undertaking a PhD at Monash University in theatre performance.

**Andrea Chester** is an Associate Professor at RMIT University. In her current role as Acting Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching, College of Design and Social Context, Andrea provides learning and teaching leadership for the College, with a focus on teaching quality and innovative curriculum design. Andrea has over 20 years’ experience as an academic, with a track record of research in the field of learning and teaching as well as in her discipline, psychology. In 2012 she led the OLT project Transition In, Transition Out, which developed and evaluated a student mentoring model to simultaneously support first and final year undergraduate students. Together with Dallas Wingrove and Angela Clarke, she has been instrumental in the development of Peer Partnerships, a model of reciprocal, reflective practice to support professional development for academic staff. She is currently leading a grant on e-learning and m-learning for GP registrars. Andrea has won a range of awards for her teaching practice, including, in 2008, an ALTC Citation for her work on e-learning.