1. Background

RMIT was founded in 1887 as a technical institute dedicated to providing professional and vocational education to the local community. From these modest beginnings we have grown to be the largest dual-sector (higher education and vocational educational and training) provider in Australia, with close to 60,000 students enrolled in our programs. Throughout our 120-year history, our aims have remained essentially the same: to ‘create and disseminate knowledge to meet the needs of industry and the community and foster in students the skills and passion to contribute to and engage with the world’ RMIT’s Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 celebrates this heritage and re-affirms the university’s commitment to its fundamental mission.

2. Scope

RMIT’s Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 is a companion paper to the Academic Plan 2007-2010 that was passed by Council in December, 2006. The Academic Plan 2007-2010 contains action plans in relation to:

- Profile
- Research and Learning and Teaching
- Professional Learning and development
- The ‘Dual Sector Advantage’
- Internationalisation - The ‘Global Passport”
- Learning and Teaching

For its part, the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 excerpts from this list of initiatives those that relate specifically to learning and teaching activities. The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 also provides some of the philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of learning and teaching at RMIT that were not contained within the Academic Plan 2007-2010. At the core of the Academic Plan 2007-2010 and the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 are four defining objectives: to produce work-ready graduates with a hunger for life-long learning, to ensure student satisfaction, to provide a ‘global passport’ for graduates, and to maximise the university’s existing dual-sector advantage. In explicating this set of objectives, and how we can best achieve them, the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 acts as both a reference for our students and an operational blueprint for the university. It aims to provide a framework for building on our existing strengths while remaining highly responsive to the requirements of our students, the economy and the world of work into which our students will graduate.

3. Our Approach to Learning and Teaching

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RMIT's vision for learning and teaching is built on an understanding that learning is an active, participatory process. Our approach to education is also characterised by a commitment to flexible study pathways which maximise choice across and within the Higher Education (HE) and TAFE sectors and between study and work, the provision of work-integrated and work-relevant education that produces graduates who are capable of working and contributing to communities internationally.

Curricula at RMIT are designed to enable graduates to develop the ability to deal effectively with novel situations in a changing work and social world. Programs at RMIT include:

- An explicit capability (HE) or competency (TAFE) approach where learning of discipline-, profession- or industry-specific knowledge, abilities and skills is structured throughout the whole program and opportunities to integrate this learning in work- or community-relevant learning activities is provided; and,
- The alignment of learning outcomes with supportive learning activities, formative and summative assessment that is criterion referenced and valid (i.e. genuinely measures what it purports to measure).

Pedagogy at RMIT is characterised by a learning centred approach which recognises that the ultimate test of the effectiveness of learning and teaching is whether it has helped students to learn. Pedagogy at RMIT is also founded upon recognition and respect for student diversity so that learning opportunities cater for all, including those who may be disadvantaged. More specifically, we recognise that:

- Students enter RMIT with a wealth of experience and understanding and that our learning and teaching builds upon this.
- Learning and teaching is always a multilayered experience between teacher and students, students and students, students and teacher where all parties learn.
- Difference, whether cultural, social, in age or gender is a positive attribute of our learning environments and a resource that supports cultural and social awareness.
- Intellectual freedom is nurtured when multiple perspectives are engaged and debate is encouraged

**RMIT expects teaching staff at all levels to:**

- have a commitment to share their field of expertise and its relevance to professional practice or industry roles.
- improve practice as a teacher through continuing professional learning and development and critical self reflection.
- use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies, carefully chosen to facilitate intended learning outcomes including appropriate educational technologies.
- actively involve students in learning through methods such as problem- or project-based learning, case studies, role-play, discussion and debate.
• Provide formative feedback to students on their learning during each course.
• Listen to students, learn from them and use their feedback to make learning more effective.
• Engage in the scholarship of learning and teaching.

**RMIT expects students at all levels to:**

• contribute to their own learning through academic engagement in all learning activities including reading and reflection
• engage in individual and group assessment tasks
• conform to academic policies governing learning and teaching

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**THE RMIT GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES**

In summary, RMIT graduates will be:

- work-ready
- active learners
- life-long learners
- global in outlook and competence
- culturally and socially aware
- innovative
- environmentally aware and responsible

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**4. Action Plan**

RMIT’s *Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007–2010* will:

• enhance the quality of learning and teaching across the university as a whole.
• strengthen support services for learning and teaching.
• promote program innovation and staff learning and development.
• improve e-Learning.
• simplify program offerings and complete the process of course rationalisation.
• foster the internationalisation of curriculum.
• enhance work-integrated and work-based learning.
Moving forward.

Beginning in 2007 RMIT will:

- develop a mandatory teaching qualification for all new level A and B academic staff who do not have an equivalent teaching qualification. New staff at Level C and above, and existing staff, will be encouraged to participate in the current qualification offered.
- conduct a module of the mandatory teaching qualification at RMIT’s Vietnam campus to explore cross-cultural issues in learning and reinforce the global scope of the institution.
- develop an induction and professional learning and development program for all sessional teaching staff.
- coordinate a university-wide staff learning and development program.
- recognise and reward teaching excellence (both individual and team).
- introduce a teaching sabbatical program.
- review our offshore teaching models for consistency and quality.
- conduct a formal review of the learning and teaching services provided by the university to provide more effective support, and achieve greater efficiencies and co-ordination.
- within the context of this review, improve RMIT’s capacity in curriculum development, particularly within vocational education and training (VET), maintaining a strong focus on the development of graduate capabilities.
- review and enhance academic support to international onshore students, and achieve a closer alignment with the provision of relevant student services.
- establish an Indigenous Academic Partnership Committee chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) with the aim of improving Indigenous students’ participation and the indigenous student experience in VET and higher education (HE).
- improve e-learning and the use of information communication technology.
- ensure that excellence in e-Learning is recognised and rewarded in learning and teaching awards (both individual and collective) and staff promotions schemes.
- collaborate with Information Technology Services in the development of a student portal. The portal will create a single point of access to student support services, learning content, interactivity with peers and networks, course and program information, learning content and student administration.
The Learning and Teaching Investment Fund.

RMIT will establish a Learning and Teaching Investment Fund comprising two funding programs which are designed to support the learning and teaching initiatives as expressed in the strategy and to foster the scholarship of learning and teaching.

The Course and Program Initiatives Program

For the development of course and program initiatives aligned with RMIT’s strategic priorities, including:

- **Dual sector qualifications** – Initiatives that promote pathways between sectors, including dual sector qualifications (eg. Associate Degrees, industry-based pathways, cross-sector electives).

- **Indigenous programs** - Programs to support the participation and learning outcomes of indigenous Australians (eg. Co-operative Training Partnerships).

- **RMIT Vietnam** - New programs or electives for delivery at RMIT Vietnam or of RIUV courses to other RMIT campuses or offshore partners.

- **Industry relevance** - New or renewed programs with significant industry input that support vocational and professional outcomes in priority and emerging areas.

- **Global passport** - Curriculum development that promotes student mobility (virtual and campus-based) and the portability of qualifications.

- **Work-integrated learning** – Development of new or existing programs for delivery in Australia and off-shore.

- **E-learning** - Initiatives that improve the online experience for students in Australia and across borders.

The Professional Learning and development Program

For enhancing the quality of learning and teaching through:

- a mandatory qualification in tertiary teaching.

- a teaching sabbatical program offering opportunities to learn more about effective learning and teaching practice and to participate in international staff exchange and programs focused on learning and teaching.

- support for preparing competitive learning and teaching grants and for publications in the area of learning and teaching.
ongoing development for learning and teaching

Actions to 2010 will include:

• extending follow-up services to new graduates, particularly in relation to enhancing employment opportunities in Australia and internationally.

• developing further mechanisms for recognising and rewarding outstanding teachers, and providing opportunities for them to share their expertise.

• embedding formal mentoring arrangements for new teaching staff.

• systematically evaluating the effectiveness of educational technologies and the quality of online learning materials.

• implementing systems that that facilitate the efficient management of digital resources.

• simplifying program architecture to facilitate the development of pathway and dual-sector qualifications, and to support opportunities for cross-border credit transfer.

• utilising RMIT’s engagement with industry to improve understanding and delivery of work-integrated learning and work-based learning practices in order to identify the best approaches and to share them across the university.

• developing further financial incentives to encourage greater collaboration across schools and across sectors.

• Targeting academic staff learning and development in the areas of:
  - effective student engagement, including, in particular, large class teaching techniques.
  - learning and teaching in partnered arrangements (offshore and onshore).
  - cross-cultural learning and teaching.
  - assessment and feedback.
  - internationalising the curriculum.
  - Online learning and teaching and facilitation.
  - program development encompassing pathways, articulation, work-integrated learning and flexible delivery.

Vocational education and training (VET)

RMIT is one of the largest and most prestigious providers of VET in the nation. Approximately one-third of RMIT’s students study in the VET sector, and VET is central to RMIT’s aspiration to be industry’s first-choice provider of work-relevant learning.
In relation to VET, the learning and teaching strategy proposes to:

- position RMIT as Victoria’s leading VET provider by pursuing specialisations in relation to:
  - high-level skills and qualifications.
  - dual-sector qualifications.
  - smooth pathways between areas such as apprenticeship, VET, higher education and industry training pathways.
  - industry engagement through work-based training and innovation in assessment, linked to industry specialisations.

- improve RMIT’s capacity to meet the needs of prospective and existing workers in areas of specialisation and skills shortage, concentrating on disengaged youth, older workers, and Indigenous people.

- enhance RMIT’s international operations by:
  - growing load on-shore through the articulation and higher qualifications markets.
  - engaging in product development driven by global and local skills shortages.
  - increasing offshore activities through engagement with enterprise training and the skilled migration market.
  - improving the portability and international recognition of VET qualifications.

**Moving forward**

Beginning in 2007 RMIT will:

- expand industry partnerships and enterprise-based training and assessment.

- improve access to RMIT VET programs for older workers (35–64) and younger people without Year 12 qualifications.

- develop a targeted marketing campaign for VET at RMIT.

- develop learning partnerships engaging indigenous communities and industry

- develop staff capacity in the recognition of prior learning

- focus on target markets and product development for international onshore TAFE.

- explore opportunities to use RMIT’s Vietnam ‘hub’ to increase offshore business development and enterprise training.

**Ongoing development**

Actions to 2010 include:
• modernising apprenticeship training pathways in partnership with government and industry.

• establishing RMIT as a leading provider of paraprofessional and high technician-level skills and qualifications in response to looming skills shortages.

• strengthening innovation partnerships with enterprises through the provision of accredited and non-accredited training and research and development.

• implementing leadership development within the RMIT VET community to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship.

Addressing the dual sector advantage

As a dual-sector university, RMIT has the opportunity to provide learning situations that combine the expertise that is available within its VET and higher education sectors.

The learning and teaching strategy can do this by:
• ensuring students have access to accurate information about educational pathways.

• ensuring that those pathways are flexible and compliant with established policies, and are driven by demand from industry.

• reviewing and, where possible, simplifying higher education program architecture to facilitate the development of dual sector qualifications.

Moving forward

Beginning in 2007 RMIT will:
• provide financial incentives for cross-sector initiatives.

• review and, where possible, simplify HE program architecture to facilitate the development of dual sector qualifications.

• undertake a market review of existing dual-sector qualifications, and support the development of new qualifications through the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund.

• through the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund, develop VET modules that can be delivered as higher education electives in undergraduate degrees.

• develop concurrent dual sector qualifications, along with a new generation of sequential dual sector qualifications known as ‘the industry-based pathway’.

• through the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund, develop VET modules that can be delivered as higher education electives in undergraduate degrees.
Ongoing development

Actions to 2010 will include:

- developing the capacity of staff across both sectors to integrate VET and HE offerings.
- exploring opportunities to increase synergies between VET and HE in research, particularly as it relates to industry engagement. This will have require targeted professional learning and development and support to staff in both sectors.

The global passport

RMIT’s goal of providing its students with a ‘global passport to learning and work’ extends into program curricula, staffing, student mobility, and the nature of offshore learning and teaching models. Primarily, however, it involves the creation or enhancement of qualifications that are capable of crossing national borders and labour markets.

The learning and teaching strategy proposes to achieve this through:

- academic initiatives built upon the ‘twin hubs’ in Melbourne and Vietnam (RIUV) the promotion of student and staff mobility.
- ensuring that, wherever possible, RMIT programs achieve cross-border accreditation

Moving forward

Beginning in 2007 RMIT will:

- develop a ‘whole of university’ approach to student mobility.
- complete a review of international accreditation and portability of RMIT qualifications.
- improve the international experience of staff by implementing professional learning and development exchanges between Vietnam and Melbourne, including within the proposed teaching qualification.
- review RMIT’s model for the delivery of programs offshore in relation to quality and viability.
- promote the development of online elective courses to be offered by RIUV into Melbourne.

Ongoing development
Actions to 2010 include:

- developing the capacity of RIUV to support offshore learning and teaching partnerships located in the Asia-Pacific and the development and delivery of programs into RMIT Australia.

- considering opportunities for education and research partnership with other international institutions active in Vietnam.

- promoting international online credit-bearing collaborations with recognised international partners.

- developing resources and practices to collate and disseminate exemplars of internationalised curriculum and teaching across RMIT.

**Research and learning and teaching**

In addition to the emphasis placed on other areas of expertise, the learning and teaching plan also acknowledges the strength of RMIT’s research activities and aims to build on opportunities to align learning and teaching with research.

The learning and teaching strategy proposes to achieve this by:

- supporting the Postgraduate Student Experience and encouraging the development of a research student cohort.

- encouraging a Scholarship of Learning and teaching which is reflected in recognised research outcomes.

- utilising research in teaching – particularly in relation to RMIT research Institutes and areas of strength.

**5. Targets for achievement in learning and teaching**

There are a number of key indicators by which the university measures success. These include graduate employment levels, enterprise formation or self-employment and graduate satisfaction with the course and the relevancy of their qualification as well as staff satisfaction with the learning and teaching environment.

Targets for achievement to 2010 include:

- graduate employment 5% over national graduate average by 2010

- graduates involved in enterprise formation 5% over national graduate average by 2010

- student completion rates at 5% above the national average
• overall student satisfaction with courses and outcomes 5% over national student average by 2010