

Leading into the future

The term education comes from the Latin “to lead out”, acknowledging that learning is an interaction between the teacher and the taught.

This notion is at the heart of RMIT University’s approach to learning and teaching. At RMIT we recognise that teaching is first and foremost about people; it’s about inspiring them, challenging them and motivating them to discover things for themselves.

RMIT is dedicated to helping our academic staff strengthen their skills base and their ability to lead our students out into a stronger future.

To achieve this we must be ready to invest in new ideas. It is in that spirit that RMIT has adopted the Academic Plan 2006-2010. This brochure is an introduction, highlighting some of its key features.

I encourage you to spend a little time discovering how, with your participation, the Academic Plan can shape and improve the RMIT experience.



Professor Jim Barber
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

July 2007

Our four-point strategy

RMIT has launched an Academic Plan to guide RMIT until 2010, developed to support the University's Strategic Plan, RMIT 2010: Designing the Future. It can be read in conjunction with the RMIT Research and Innovation Strategy 2005-2010 (www.rmit.edu.au/rd/ri-strategy2005-10).

The Academic Plan is centred on four key strategic objectives to ensure a distinctive, satisfying and stimulating educational experience for all RMIT students.

They are:

- ▶ **Work-ready graduates with a hunger for lifelong learning**
RMIT aims to create graduates with the key capabilities which will support them in employment, enterprise formation and lifelong learning.
- ▶ **Student satisfaction**
RMIT aims to offer a positive student experience engaging with staff, curriculum and learning methodologies.
- ▶ **The global passport**
RMIT aims to develop further as a global university which promotes student mobility, ensures the portability of its awards and prepares graduates to engage in their professions globally.
- ▶ **A "dual-sector advantage"**
RMIT aims to offer ever more flexible access to, and options for, progression within and between awards and within and between sectors.

How are we going to get there? The success of the Academic Plan will depend first on flexibility – a willingness to try new ideas and methods of working. RMIT will strengthen its commitment to e-learning, for example, providing more resources for students – and feedback to them – on-line.

That flexibility is in turn predicated on the initiative of RMIT's most important resource, our staff. Academics are encouraged to come forward with ideas for new ways of teaching, new programs, new media – and the University is making funding available to create the space for their development (see next page).

All this will be held together by University-wide leadership and collaboration. Central resources will be assembled and deployed in the service of good ideas.



Making ideas happen

To make sure good ideas become good initiatives, RMIT is putting resources into the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund (LTIF). The fund supports the development of new learning and teaching ideas and professional development for staff.

Academics with ideas for new or revised programs and courses in areas of strategic importance for RMIT can apply to the LTIF for the resources to develop the idea.

In some cases, academics may be eligible for a teaching fellowship of up to six months to work on proposals.

The fund will also help staff look at new ways of learning, to develop innovative teaching methods and assessment that will improve the student learning experience and student outcomes.

RMIT is also supporting professional development by funding opportunities for academic staff to undertake activities that promote the scholarship of learning and teaching.

Staff can also qualify for grants to undertake the Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning.

Indigenous focus

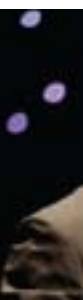
The Academic Plan incorporates a focus on pathways for Indigenous students. The Plan aims to enhance the Indigenous student experience, along with participation and completion rates.

Projects supported by the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund include an outreach program to encourage Indigenous secondary students to undertake further study at RMIT, using taster programs and high-profile Indigenous mentors.

From theory to practice

Proposals supported so far by Learning and Teaching Investment Fund grants include:

- ▶ Developing a new approach to assessing work-integrated learning by bringing together cross-portfolio student teams to undertake professional activities in a virtual learning environment.
- ▶ Resourcing staff in the School of Creative Media to enhance the ethical and professional practice components of work-integrated learning.
- ▶ Consolidating the teaching of statistics within an e-learning package that clearly links theory and published research.
- ▶ Designing a methodology for developing learning objects that can be used across a range of curriculum via the Learning Content Management System.
- ▶ Creating web-based materials and resources to enable students in large classes to obtain feedback and reflect on their learning preferences.
- ▶ Delivering a customised program for mining supervisors in Laos to improve on-site training and assessment of the local workforce.
- ▶ Assessing the teaching of ethical decision-making in the Bachelor of Business (Accountancy) and making recommendations for improvement.
- ▶ Creating a course that develops graduate capabilities in first-year students across all Bachelor of Engineering programs.



Linking innovation and industry

RMIT is a leader in bringing together vocational and higher education. Our dual-sector advantage means we span the spectrum from entry-level vocational programs to post-doctoral research.

The Academic Plan aims to build on the University's record of creating work-ready students by synthesising our strengths across all learning and teaching areas.

Over the next few years we shall work to make it easier for students to move smoothly between vocational and professional programs – or to study them simultaneously.

We shall develop a new generation of sequential dual-sector qualifications – “industry-based pathways” – that draw on our rich experience of working with employers to tailor programs to real-world needs.

More students will spend time in workplaces as part of their education.

RMIT has a part to play in solving the widely acknowledged skills shortage. The Academic Plan contains a focus on meeting the needs of future and existing workers.

In particular, the University is improving access to vocational programs for older workers and younger people without Year 12 qualifications.

Team work

The Academic Plan puts a fresh focus on project teaching. Collaborating across disciplines and Schools will allow academic staff to mobilise greater intellectual and practical resources.

Over time, teamwork around solving common problems may lead to new credit-bearing courses.

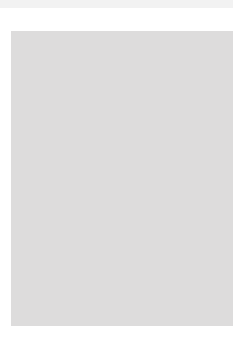
Breaking down disciplinary barriers will also liberate thinking around new forms of assessment. And project work will also strengthen the integrity of the University's qualifications, by reducing the risks of plagiarism.

Hand in hand

Many of the projects supported by the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund involve academics working across discipline and portfolio boundaries. Some incorporate vocational and higher education elements.

They include projects that will enable students to:

- ▶ Complete the Certificate III Electrotechnology at the same time as undertaking the Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical).
- ▶ Undertake vocational units as part of the Building Services course within the Bachelor of Applied Science (Construction Management) program.
- ▶ Complete the Certificate IV Occupational Health and Safety at the same time as undertaking the Bachelor of Arts (Criminal Justice Administration).



From Victoria to Vietnam – and back

RMIT International University Vietnam is expanding rapidly and the campuses in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi are playing an increasingly important role in RMIT learning and teaching.

Strengthening the links between our campuses in Australia and Vietnam is part of providing our students with a “Global Passport” – the skills, experience and qualifications to participate in the international economy.

Those links go hand in hand with RMIT’s broader policies on increasing international mobility for staff and students, and winning international accreditation for our qualifications.

The Academic Plan endorses three key steps:

- ▶ Academic initiatives that link the “twin hubs” of Melbourne and Vietnam.
- ▶ Greater staff and student mobility.
- ▶ Achieving, where possible, cross-border accreditation for RMIT programs.

As a consequence, an exciting new component of academic staff training is the implementation of professional development exchanges between Australia and Vietnam.

Australian-based academic staff are visiting RMIT Vietnam as part of their Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning program (see below).

Time spent at RMIT Vietnam’s campuses helps give staff a real sense of RMIT as an international university. It provides insights into the learning, research or work placement opportunities opening up in Vietnam for RMIT students on other campuses.

It also offers Australian-based staff opportunities to grapple with how their programs can be made relevant and accessible to Vietnam-based students.

The process is also intended to send a strong symbolic signal to new and prospective staff, students and their families, and the broader academic world that RMIT is a global university that values advanced teaching skills.

Such initiatives can pave the way for a further integration of RMIT’s activities across its campuses.

Australian-based RMIT students and researchers are finding RMIT Vietnam exciting and welcoming. The future will see more programs being taught in both Australia and Vietnam, with students spending time in both countries.

And RMIT Vietnam may become the base for further RMIT-wide teaching, planning and administration.



Teaching the teachers

A crucial step in raising the quality of the lecture theatre or classroom experience, and in raising student satisfaction, is ensuring that academic staff have the best teaching skills.

Under the Academic Plan, all new academic staff appointed at levels A and B will be required to undertake a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning.

The program covers a range of pedagogical options. Staff explore assessment, team approaches to teaching, multidisciplinary methods, and the use of e-learning platforms.

An important additional element will be project-based learning – an approach that encourages collaboration across portfolios and disciplines, provides an antidote to plagiarism and that suits another priority within the Academic Plan, blending higher education and vocational programs and initiatives.

New staff at level C and existing staff will be encouraged to formalise their teaching skills, and the University is developing an induction and professional development program for all sessional teaching staff.

Two countries, one university

The Learning and Teaching Investment Fund is already supporting projects that aim to intensify the links between RMIT and RMIT Vietnam. They include:

- ▶ Investigating the feasibility of delivering the Bachelors of Electronic and Electrical Engineering at RMIT Vietnam.
- ▶ Developing online course materials to enable the delivery of the Bachelor of Business (Accountancy) in Vietnam.
- ▶ Developing a model for multi-disciplinary, project-based teaching for international professional experiences starting in Vietnam.

Find out more

This short brochure can only begin to describe the breadth and ambition of the Academic Plan.

To find out more:

Read the Academic Plan
www.rmit.edu.au/about/vision

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