Introduction: Response to Feedback Received on the Academic Plan Green Paper

The draft Academic Plan – the ‘Green Paper’ – was developed following circulation and discussion of a series of position papers. These papers canvassed the key elements involved in the Academic Plan: future academic directions, student profile, learning and teaching, the ‘dual sector advantage’, a strategy for vocational education and training, the relationship between research and teaching and academic staff development. The Green Paper was tabled at Academic Board and Council, was circulated widely as a consultation draft, and posted on the RMIT Intranet (http://www.rmit.edu.au/planning-group/academicplan) in September. As part of the consultation process, there have been regular meetings with Heads of School in the development of the Green Paper, and formal consultation with the University Leadership Group via a Leadership Development Session (18 August) and a forum held in Storey Hall (30 August). The Plan has been discussed on several occasions with the Vice-Chancellors’ Executive team and the Academic Board, and the Green Paper was provided to Council for discussion and feedback in October. Informal consultation has been extensive.

Feedback has been universally constructive and, in general, positive. All feedback – both formal and informal – was carefully considered. However, not all of it could be directly addressed in the Plan. A Plan which tries to be all things to all people will never provide much by way of direction. Not only did feedback from some contradict feedback from others but some of the suggestions have been respectfully declined.

This paper discusses some of the more significant and consistent themes emerging from the feedback, and how they have shaped the final draft of the Academic Plan that is to go to Council in December. Feedback from the Academic Board has been particularly helpful, and as the Plan is being implemented specific initiatives will need to come before Academic Board for approval. A list identifying some of the more significant changes inspired by the feedback is attached.

Main issues emerging from feedback and how they are being addressed

*Academic directions*

Some respondents argue the need for a clearer delineation of RMIT’s future academic directions than is currently outlined in the Green Paper. Linked to this has been feedback urging greater attention to RMIT’s values (those expressed in the Strategic Plan, but also the values embodied in RMIT’s historic commitment to ‘lifelong learning’ and education for working people) and existing areas of strength (eg work integrated learning and a the development of graduate attributes). Respondents also noted the need to balance RMIT’s ‘useful’ orientation against its commitment to teaching, research and scholarship for their own sake – celebrating the intellectual life of the University.

These concerns for clarity, balance and acknowledgment of RMIT’s strengths and values have all informed the redraft of the Plan. The sort of university that RMIT is, and aspires to be, is defined in the Strategic Plan, and the Academic Plan describes actions to give effect to that vision. However, rather than paraphrase the Strategic Plan or seek to be prescriptive, the Academic Plan recognises that terms such as ‘global university of technology’ and ‘global passport’ will have slightly different meanings for different people, depending on their personal perspective and the nature of their work at RMIT. The conversation about how these aspirations are understood and enacted is part of the richness of academic life, and will continue to inform the Plan and the actions arising from it.
In short, the Academic Plan should not be read in isolation. It is a sequel to the Strategic Plan and is complemented by RMIT’s Research Strategy and the industry engagement strategy which the Vice-Chancellor’s Office will soon release. This latter document goes into considerable detail about the future prospects for RMIT’s disciplines.

While recognising the danger of turning the Academic Plan into something it is not, in view of the feedback received, it seems important that the aspirations expressed in the Strategic Plan be reaffirmed and communicated effectively within RMIT. RMIT’s academic directions should also be clear in messages to external stakeholders. Therefore, an internal and external communication strategy will be developed following the Academic Plan’s endorsement. This communications strategy will make it clear what the Plan seeks to do and how it relates to the RMIT’s vision of the kind of university it seeks to be.

Implementation and the Role of Academic Board

Other concerns relate to the implementation of the Plan. In particular, staff have expressed concern about the detail of what is proposed, and the feasibility of achieving some of the more ambitious initiatives (for example, the mandatory teaching qualification for new staff).

Taking these issues into account, some of the proposed initiatives have been streamlined or deferred in the final draft of the Plan. However, implementation details were never intended to be part of the Academic Plan. A detailed implementation schedule for 2007 is currently being developed and will be finalised when the Academic Plan is approved by council. It is also recognised that many of the initiatives canvassed in the Plan will require Academic Board approval when the detail has been worked out. It follows that endorsement of the Plan does not necessarily imply unqualified support for every initiative.
## Summary of Changes to Green Paper Academic Plan

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| Greater prominence of industry engagement in shaping and responding to academic activity. (This refers to the industry engagement work commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor and is also referred to in RMIT's Business Plan). | 2 (Scope & Objectives),  
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| Strengthening use of financial incentives to support dual-sector /cross-sectoral activity | 3.1 (Academic Specialisations, 2007 priority actions),  
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1 Does not include wording or structural changes made in response to suggestions; nor does it include changes that were the result of further investigation and discussion, e.g. changes to the Grad. Cert. in Tertiary Teaching
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Academic Plan 2006-2010 – White Paper

Office of the
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

December 2006
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1 Introduction and Strategic Principles

Think big. Build small. Then progress in increments. This is the basic logic behind RMIT’s Academic Plan 2010. More accurately, it is the Strategic Plan, RMIT 2010: Designing the Future, that provides the “think big” piece. The Academic Plan picks up the story from there and seeks to “build small”.

At a time when official government policy is to promote fierce competition to RMIT from private providers and overseas universities alike, our Strategic Plan speaks of being “the first choice provider of work relevant education in Australia” by 2010. And when border controls are stiffening around the world, we are nevertheless resolved that a degree from RMIT will provide our students with a “global passport” to work and learning. In total, RMIT’s Strategic Plan sets out eight priorities for this planning cycle, the top two of which have just been identified. The other six include:

- Developing focused areas of excellence in research and scholarship that reflect our global engagement with industries and communities;
- Ensuring flexible pathways for our students that exploit RMIT’s “dual sector advantage”;
- Creating a stimulating and satisfying student experience that celebrates diversity;
- Attracting, developing and retaining the best academic staff;
- Developing and supporting systems that promote excellence in education and research;
- Developing a business model that enables us to achieve our objectives.

Through all of this, we are to give expression to RMIT’s core values of: useful, connected, creative, fair, and passionate.

How can the Academic Plan deliver on such a big assignment by 2010? The only possible answer is: one day at a time. Fortunately, the Academic Plan does not represent the first of these days. That day passed long ago. Ever since Francis Ormond put up £5,000 in 1881 and the figure was matched by the generosity of workers from Trades Hall Council, RMIT has been moving in the direction of our latest Strategic Plan. After all, RMIT is already among the first choice providers of vocational education, with one of the best employment records of any university in the country, despite its location in one of the nation’s slowest growing economies. RMIT’s graduates can already be found in disproportionate numbers in various industries across the globe. And RMIT academic staff already provide some of the best research and richest, most diverse educational experiences in the country, particularly via work-integrated and work-based learning.

We therefore begin the Academic Plan 2010 by celebrating these achievements and by reaffirming RMIT’s distinctive place in Australian society. Despite this, the Academic Plan does not pretend to know what RMIT will look like in every detail by 2010. Universities that act this way are either self-deluded or moribund. The prevailing socio-political environment occupied by Australian universities today is much too volatile for that. Instead, our strategy is to head in the direction of the Strategic Plan but to focus only on what can be done tomorrow and the day after that. This is because the future belongs not just to the visionary, but also to the nimble.

Here then, is the first of the strategic principles underlying the Academic Plan – Flexibility. A number of the initiatives proposed in RMIT Academic Plan 2010 are aimed at maximising RMIT’s responsiveness by investing in new ideas and new opportunities as they arise. Of course this principle begs the question of where these ideas will come from and who will keep watch for the opportunities? These tasks fall to RMIT’s most valuable resource – its staff - and this brings us to the second strategic principle of the Academic Plan – Encouragement of Bottom-Up Initiatives. No-one knows the potential for RMIT’s fields of endeavour like those who labour in them. It is to them that management must look for solutions.
This reference to management introduces the third strategic principle behind the Academic Plan – **Promotion of Effective Top-Down Policies**. If risk-taking were the sole principle behind the Academic Plan, RMIT would soon be running in all directions at once. It would descend into a ‘multiversity’ at war with itself. It is the combination of ‘bottom up initiative’ guided by strong ‘top down policy’ that provides us with our best chance of success.

The final strategic principle concerns the need at RMIT for greater **Collaboration** in pursuit of common objectives. Much excellent academic work occurs within Portfolios, Schools and programs at RMIT, but it is not always well co-ordinated or communicated across the institution. RMIT can enhance its performance across a range of academic areas by pulling together; by sharing its resources and its achievements more effectively than it currently does.

### 2 Scope and Objectives

The scope and objectives of the Academic Plan were set out in the 2006-08 Business Plan. In essence, the actions set out here must be directed towards achieving the academic aspirations set out in RMIT’s Strategic Plan. These can be summarised as follows:

- Developing academic specialisations which reflect RMIT’s unique strengths and aspirations and particularly RMIT’s engagement with industry.
- The development of programs that are viable, strategically focused and of the highest quality.
- Improving the student experience, particularly in relation to quality of teaching.
- An approach to learning and teaching that:
  - promotes and supports academic excellence,
  - promotes and supports RMIT’s values: creative, fair, useful, passionate and connected
  - maximises learning opportunities for students,
  - develops attributes in RMIT graduates that will help them to be highly desirable to employers and creative and productive global citizens
  - identifies and supports RMIT specialisations and
  - captures synergies between teaching and research.
- Capturing the advantages offered by RMIT’s dual sector character, while developing a distinct strategy for vocational education and training.
- Developing academic staff capabilities in support of these goals.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has led development of the Academic Plan, and will continue to work with other portfolios and Heads of School to ensure that the Plan is informed by, and informs, work being undertaken elsewhere.

### 3 Priority areas

While there is significant overlap among the issues addressed by the Plan, the main actions envisaged are captured under seven priority areas. Detailed implementation plans will be developed for each of these areas. The plan will be reviewed annually in light of its stated objectives, and priority actions for the year ahead scoped.
3.1 RMIT’s academic specialisations

RMIT’s broad academic directions have been set in the Strategic Plan. Planning and managing RMIT’s profile – that is, determining the suite of programs to be offered and the targets for student enrolments within them - is the principal means for giving expression to them. In developing its profile, the Business Plan commits us to focussing on return on revenue rather than volume in student load, and to concentrating load in areas that are consistent with RMIT’s aspirations to be global in orientation and work-relevant in focus. In operational terms, then, RMIT’s profile allocation process needs to manifest the triple imperatives of excellence, viability and relevance.

There is a balance to be struck here. On the one hand, RMIT requires clarity of vision if it is to continue to thrive in an increasingly crowded tertiary education sector; but on the other, it must avoid narrowing its focus so much that it loses the capacity to respond to new opportunities and threats. This is not to say that RMIT will not terminate some of its academic specialisations in this planning cycle or start new ones; merely that at this stage in its development, the Academic Plan identifies a method for arriving at such decisions rather than anticipating what all of those decisions will be.

The Academic Plan proposes to achieve this through:

1. Strategic investment in new ideas (see Learning and Teaching Investment Fund, below);

2. A rigorous annual profile allocation process according to the priorities established in RMIT’s Strategic and Business Plans;

3. Ongoing re-alignment of profile (shrinkage and expansion) according to key performance indicators and emergent opportunities.


In 2007 RMIT will:

- Adopt a more rigorous approach to profile planning. This will include setting minimum class sizes (see also Section 3.2), improving the use of quality and viability data in relation to determining load targets for onshore and offshore programs, and aligning profile planning more closely with RMIT’s industry engagement strategy.

- Invest in new and existing programs aligned with RMIT’s strategic directions (see Learning and Teaching Investment Fund outlined under 3.2 below).

- Use the budget process to create incentives for the development of programs which support RMIT’s dual sector advantage and the delivery of a ‘global passport’ to students. The first targets will be programs which integrate cross-sectoral delivery and the RMIT International Industry Experience and Research Program (RIIERP) (See sections 3.3 and 3.6 below)
Actions to 2010 include:

- Embedding an approach which progressively moves profile towards high revenue/high return programs aligned with RMIT’s strategic directions.
- Improving the quality and relevance of market intelligence and its application at all levels of profile planning and management.
- Achieving better alignment between profile development across all sites of delivery, including Vietnam and offshore nodes.

3.2 Learning and Teaching

Education at RMIT is about learning and teaching rather than teaching and learning. It is about placing students in the forefront of activity; it is focussed on discovery rather than instruction; it is experiential rather than passive. Students enter RMIT with a diversity of experience, and teaching needs to build on this.

RMIT’s learning and teaching strategy has at its core four defining objectives:

- **Work ready graduates with a hunger for lifelong learning.** Graduates possessing the key capabilities which will support them in employment, enterprise formation and lifelong learning.
- **Student satisfaction.** A positive student experience engaging with staff, curriculum and learning methodologies.
- **The Global Passport.** Belonging to a global university that promotes student mobility, ensures the portability of its awards and prepares graduates to engage in their professions globally.
- **A ‘dual sector advantage’.** Flexible access to and options for progression within and between awards and within and between sectors.

RMIT must also listen to what students are telling us. Student satisfaction with teaching varies across programs and disciplines. In some cases it is very high, but it is generally low as measured by sector-wide instruments. Within RMIT, student surveys are helping to identify areas for improvement, including:

- the use of online learning technologies,
- the quality of feedback provided to students,
- the quality of service teaching and teaching in large classes,
- student access to teaching staff, and
- the need for more formative and student-centred assessment practices.
- the quality of facilities that support teaching and student life.

In responding to these priorities, the diversity of RMIT’s student population presents us with a challenge. For example, the learning styles and needs of international onshore students are unfamiliar to many of us. Similarly, RMIT’s offshore teaching arrangements vary from partner to partner, which poses problems for us in relation to program integrity and teaching approaches. A third challenge arises from RMIT’s commitment to industry-relevant learning because of its implications for teaching method and content.

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3 The Good Teaching Scales of the Course Experience Questionnaire (Higher Education) and the Student Outcomes survey (TAFE).
Whatever RMIT is able to achieve on these fronts will depend upon the motivation and skill of the academic staff in both sectors. This means institutionalising recognition for good teaching, professional development targeted at RMIT’s learning and teaching strategy, and promoting teaching practices that staff themselves enjoy. It also requires us to recognise and develop synergies between teaching and research across both sectors (see 3.6 below).

The Academic Plan proposes to achieve these goals through measures that:

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

For further discussion of these issues see the Learning and Teaching Position Paper at http://www.rmit.edu.au/planning-group/academicplan/.

In 2007 RMIT will:

- Develop a mandatory teaching qualification for all new level A and B academic staff. This program will, _inter alia_, contain an on-site module in Vietnam and an introduction to RMIT’s e-Learning platforms. New staff at Level C and above, and existing staff, will be encouraged to participate in the current qualification offered within the DSC portfolio.

- Develop and fund an induction and professional development program for all sessional teaching staff.

- Review and enhance academic support to international onshore students, and achieve a closer alignment with the provision of relevant student services.

- Review our offshore teaching models for consistency and quality.

- Conduct a formal review of the learning and teaching services provided within Schools, portfolios and by the Learning and Teaching Development Unit with a view to achieving more effective support and greater efficiencies and co-ordination.

- Within the context of this review, improve RMIT’s capacity in curriculum development, particularly within VET, maintaining a strong focus on the development of graduate attributes.

- Establish an Indigenous Academic Partnership Committee chaired by the DVC (A) with the aim of improving indigenous students’ pathways, completion rates, participation and the indigenous student experience in VET and higher education. In the short- to medium-term, the brief of this committee will be:

  1. To build at least one Co-operative Training Partnership modelled on the success of the Conservation and Land Management program currently running in VET.
  2. In partnership with VicTec and secondary schools, to include and promote a small number of indigenous scholarships within the industry-based engineering pathway

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1 Exclusion from the Grad. Cert. would be on the recommendation of selection panels and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).
3. Consolidate and extend the successful Koorie Cohort program that has been developed in the School of Education.

4. Liaise with the PVC (Students) Portfolio regarding the provision of services to support Indigenous students’ academic success.

- Establish a Learning and Teaching Investment Fund comprising two funding programs as follows:

  1. **Program Development Fund:**
     For the development of program initiatives aligned with RMIT’s strategic priorities, such as
     - Demonstration projects in Work Integrated Learning, teaching large classes, and enhancing the student experience.
     - Programs offering pathways between sectors, and dual sector qualifications
     - Programs offering opportunities for ‘virtual mobility’ and international curriculum development.
     - Programs with significant industry input or providing vocational opportunities in emerging fields.

  2. **Teaching Development Fund:**
     For enhancing the quality of teaching through:
     - A mandatory qualification in tertiary teaching (see below)
     - A teaching sabbatical program offering opportunities to learn more about effective teaching practice and to participate in international staff exchange and programs focused on learning and teaching.
     - Financial support for preparing competitive learning and teaching grants and for publications in the area of learning and teaching.

- Improve e-learning and the use of ICT through:

  - Ensuring a minimum online presence for all programs and courses for implementation by June 2007.
  - Ensuring that excellence in e-Learning is recognised and rewarded in teaching awards and staff promotions schemes.
  - Collaborating with ITS 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.

**Actions to 2010 include:**

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

- Improving teachers’ access to student feedback, and supporting them in responding to it.

- Developing further mechanisms for recognising and rewarding outstanding teachers, and providing opportunities for them to share their expertise.
• Systematically evaluating the effectiveness of educational technologies and the quality of online learning materials.

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

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

• Consulting with RMIT’s industry partners to improve understanding and delivery of work-integrated learning and work-based learning practices.

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

• Targeting academic staff development (see also 3.7 below) in the areas of:
  o Effective student engagement, including, in particular, large class teaching techniques
  o Teaching in partnered arrangements (offshore and onshore)
  o Cross-cultural teaching
  o Assessment and feedback
  o Internationalising the curriculum
  o Online teaching and facilitation
  o Program development and teaching for pathways, articulation, work integrated learning and flexible delivery.

3.3 The Dual Sector Advantage

As one of Australia’s few dual sector universities, RMIT has an opportunity, even responsibility, to provide learning opportunities that combine the expertise that is available within VET and HE.

The Academic Plan proposes to achieve this through:

• ensuring that all students at RMIT have access to accurate information about pathways,

• ensuring that those pathways are flexible and compliant with established policies, and

• developing concurrent dual sector qualifications, along with a new generation of sequential dual sector qualifications known as ‘the industry-based pathway’ (see ‘Dual Sector Advantage Position Paper’ referenced below).

In taking this vision forward, RMIT needs to ensure that dual sector programs are demand- rather than supply-driven. To date, not all dual sector initiatives pass this test and are under-subscribed as a consequence.

For further background and discussion of these issues see the Dual Sector Advantage Position Paper at http://www.rmit.edu.au/planning-group/academicplan/.
In 2007 RMIT will:

- Provide a financial incentive to cross-sector initiatives by allowing HE programs to retain any funded EFTSL that flows to VET, while also funding VET for that load.
- Review and, where possible, simplify higher education 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 (see 3.2 above).
- Through the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund, develop VET modules that can be delivered as higher education electives in undergraduate degrees.

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 development and support to staff in both sectors.
- Improving facilities through significant investment in campus consolidation in accordance with the annually refreshed Infrastructure Plan – Property.

3.4 A distinct strategy for vocational education and training

Key Objectives:

Approximately one-third of RMIT’s students study in the VET sector, and RMIT is one of the largest and most prestigious providers of Vocational Education and Training in the nation. VET is central to RMIT’s aspiration to be industry’s first choice provider of work relevant learning.

In relation to VET, the Academic Plan proposes:

- Positioning RMIT as Victoria’s leading VET provider by pursuing specialisations in relation to:
  - high-level skills and qualifications,
  - dual sector qualifications,
  - smooth pathways (apprenticeship, VET-HE, HE-VET, industry training pathways), and
  - industry engagement through work based training and innovation in assessment, linked to industry specialisations.
- Improving RMIT’s capacity to meet the needs of prospective and existing workers in areas of specialisation and skills shortage; in particular concentrating on disengaged youth, older workers, and Indigenous people.
• Enhancing RMIT’s international operations by:
  o Growing load on-shore through the articulation and higher qualifications markets,
  o Engaging in product development driven by global and local skills shortages,
  o Increasing offshore activities through engagement with enterprise training and the skilled migration market,
  o Improving the portability and international recognition of VET qualifications.

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 by responding vigorously and proactively to initiatives designed to stimulate demand, including the Victorian government’s Skills Store Initiative.
• Develop a targeted marketing campaign for VET at RMIT.
• Develop learning partnerships engaging indigenous communities and industry (see also Section 3.2 above).
• Develop staff capacity in recognition of prior learning, and embed improved practices within teaching practice.
• 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.

Actions to 2010 include

• Modernising apprenticeship training pathways in partnership with government and industry,
• Establishing RMIT as a leader in the provision of paraprofessional and high technician level skills and qualifications in response to looming skills shortages at AQF 5 & 6 level,
• Strengthening innovation partnerships with enterprises through the provision of accredited and non-accredited training and research and development, and
• Implementing leadership development within the RMIT VET community to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship.

3.5 Internationalisation – The Global Passport

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

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

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 development exchanges between Vietnam and Melbourne, including within the proposed teaching qualification (see 3.2 above);
- Review RMIT’s model for the delivery of programs offshore in relation to quality and viability (see 3.1 and 3.2 above);
- Promote the development of online elective courses to be offered by RIUV into Melbourne.

Actions to 2010 include:

- Developing the capacity of RIUV to support offshore 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 (the Business Plan sets a target of 60% by 2008).
- Developing resources and practices to collate and disseminate exemplars of internationalised curriculum and teaching across RMIT.

3.6 Research and Teaching

Any university worthy of the name not only sets high standards in research excellence and productivity, but also seeks every opportunity to build connections between its academic programs and its research activities. RMIT has a well-developed research strategy which is aligned with its goals to be industry-relevant, international and engaged. The academic planning process will identify and build upon opportunities to align learning and teaching with research.

The Academic Plan proposes to achieve this through:

- Supporting the Postgraduate Student Experience and encouraging the development of a research student cohort
- Encouraging a Scholarship of Teaching which which is reflected in recognised research outcomes
• Utilising Research as Teaching – particularly in relation to RMIT Research Institutes and areas of strength
• Encouraging VET teaching staff to participate in research.


In 2007 RMIT will:

• Focus on building a strong research culture within its higher degree research student population by:
  o developing opportunities for cross-school and cross-portfolio collaboration among postgraduate students;
  o amending systems to increase the quality and effectiveness of communication within and between HDR students;
  o Improve supervisor capabilities (further to recommendations of the Review of Research Training)
  o Undertake a feasibility study of a Graduate Centre in the context of fostering a research culture and community;
  o collaborating with the PVC (R&I) on a review of the structure of the Ph.D. program.

• Develop a more strategic, centrally planned approach to postgraduate research profile to ensure sufficient funding per student to support research activity;

• Through the Learning and Teaching Investment fund (see 3.2), provide further grants for industry-based multidisciplinary projects within VET and HE (see above);

• Encourage staff who are utilising innovative teaching practices to undertake publishable research and to apply for competitive funding from organisations like the Carrick Institute for this purpose.

Actions to 2010 will include:

• Exploring opportunities for VET staff to contribute to RMIT’s research engagement and output.

• Creating a centre for the scholarship of teaching to which academic staff can be released for the purpose of preparing teaching grant applications and, with the aid of senior scholars, write up teaching innovations for publication in refereed outlets.

3.7 Academic Staff Development

Academic staff development is an enabling strategy rather than an end in itself. For this reason, a number of staff development initiatives have already been identified at various points throughout this paper. What remains is to emphasise the need for better co-ordination of RMIT’s professional development activities and closer alignment of those activities with the Strategic Plan.
In 2007 RMIT will:

- Complete the review of RMIT’s Academic Promotions Policy to ensure alignment with RMIT’s strategic objectives.
- Develop a simplified academic work plan which enables staff to negotiate with Heads of School a distribution of workload that is consistent with the weightings staff intend to use in their promotion applications.
- Establish a university wide professional development working group to promote co-ordination and integration of activities across RMIT.
- Establish a series of ‘Inaugural Lectures‘ for new members of the professoriate to celebrate academic excellence, build links within the academic community and promote understanding of the professor’s role.

Actions to 2010 will include:

- Embedding formal mentoring arrangements for new junior teaching staff by senior teaching staff within school plans and individual work plans;
- Embedding support for professional development into academic leadership programs at RMIT.

4 Summary

In summary, we will begin shaping RMIT’s profile by investing in new ideas and by moving load and therefore funding according to the criteria specified in this document. There will be learning and teaching initiatives aimed at promoting, identifying and disseminating best practices while systematically addressing our shortcomings. The Academic Plan has also identified some initiatives backed by financial incentives for dual sector innovation and crafted financial disincentives for programs that pursue a policy of isolationism. We will encourage RIUV to take an increased leadership role, particularly with our offshore partners in the Asia-Pacific. The Academic Plan contains a number of recommendations for pulling RMIT’s teaching and research missions more closely together, and it points the way to staff development and promotions policies that are more closely aligned with our latest Strategic Plan.

These, then, are RMIT’s academic directions for the short to medium term. Inevitably, some ideas are better developed than others. In truth, the Academic Plan 2010 is more of a mud map than a Melways. There will also be failures among the successes. That’s life. But there is enough here to begin the next leg of RMIT’s journey. We will sort out the details as we go and deal with the failures when they happen.
5 Appendix 1: SUMMARY OF WORK UNDERTAKEN IN 2006 TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC PLAN

- Developed student load targets for 2007-2009 which, if achieved, will increase the alignment of RMIT’s profile with the Strategic Plan; and exceeded student revenue targets for 2006.

- Simplified and strengthened the processes governing program quality assurance and new program approvals in an effort to improve our responsiveness to new opportunities and support a more rigorous approach to program review.

- Revised the composition and terms of reference of the Programs and Policy Committee of Academic Board to ensure stronger academic input.

- Revised academic promotions policy and procedures to align more closely with RMIT’s strategic directions

- Commenced a review of RMIT’s official Learning and Teaching Strategy

- Reviewed RMIT’s published pathways to ensure that all pathway agreements comply with policy and are clearly communicated.

- Scoped RMIT’s existing dual sector qualifications, and developed proposals for government and industry to support their further development.

- Developed a number of new dual sector qualifications for delivery in 2007-2008

- Developed a workforce development framework for VET aligned with RMIT’s Strategic Plan.

- Implemented an enterprise-based training program in Laos which will provide a framework for similar activity in the future.

- Commenced a project to strengthen RMIT’s L-Profile (Australian industry-funded VET load).

- Developed a draft strategy to support improved student mobility, including through the application of ‘virtual mobility’ technology;

-Commenced work on mapping programs against international accreditation bodies;

-Commissioned and received a Scoping Study for Offshore Strategy Development;

-Extended the course experience survey into Vietnam and offshore partner sites.

-Initiated a demonstration ‘research as teaching’ project within the soon-to-be-established Design Hub.

-Implemented a leadership development program, for academic leaders and leaders within central and service areas targeting key aspects of the Strategic Plan.

-Improved the quality of teaching and library facilities at the city and Bundoora campuses.