



## **TIES: Teaching Improvement and Equipment Scheme**

### **Large Grant Application Form: Teaching Improvement Progress Report<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Project Title**

Systematizing Quality Enhancement and Assurance Processes to better support student learning.

#### **\$ Amount Awarded**

\$29,909.00

#### **\$ Amount Expended**

\$24,788 expended by end of 2008; remaining \$3717 fully committed for expenditure by end Feb 2009

#### **Brief Project Description**

This project (team comprising Dr Brigid Rooney, Dr Susan Thomas and research assistant Dr Belinda Middleweek) sought to establish a good practice model for administering Unit of Study Evaluations (USE), complete with clear guidelines for Heads of School, individual staff members and students on how USE data is collected and disseminated (to staff and students) and how this impacts on quality enhancement and assurance measures across the Faculty. The project piloted an optional, voluntary and self-guided peer-observation component in order to complement USE data.

Building on an understanding of how USE data is currently collected, disseminated and implemented across the Faculty, the project focused on mapping practices in each school and identifying relevant models of good practice that while recognising the importance of local context, could bring a uniformly high standard to the faculty. The approach taken was intended to serve as a model for the Faculty cluster and the wider university community. The Heads of the four schools in the Faculty of Arts supported and participated as interviewees in the project.

#### **Progress to date**

##### **Work completed to date:**

Rich information has been collected by the project team across a number of dimensions about USE policy, perception and practice in the Faculty and key issues and relevant areas for action have been identified and planned in readiness for roll-out in 2009:

- Policy documents collected and a literature review on higher education evaluation practices and systems completed

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<sup>1</sup> This form is to be sent to the Executive Officer (Learning and Teaching) by the 30 January 2009.

- Four Heads of School interviews conducted, transcribed and analysed
- An online USE evaluation survey of Unit of Study Coordinators administered and results analysed
- An Arts student focus group session conducted, results analysed and story published in *Synergy*
- School-by-school picture of USE practices and issues developed
- Identification of key issues and actions for 2009
- Powerpoint presentation drafted to inform Faculty about project findings
- Peer Observation of Teaching scheme piloted and positively evaluated re its regular and wider dissemination within the Faculty
- Preparation of resources, literature and other materials for an online resource to support evaluation practices begun

**Actions for 2009, all ongoing:**

- Key recommendations and actions – encompassing review of Faculty policy and a raft of implementation measures currently under discussion in Arts T&L Network
- Development of timeline and action plan for implementation of the above
- Briefing paper for the Dean and Heads of School, with a focus on strategies for systematic communication of USE rationale, purposes, policy and procedures to support Chairs of Department and Unit of Study Coordinators
- Development of online resources to support and maintain quality evaluation practices over time, including online access to the Peer Observation of Teaching Module

**If Project completed, list project outcomes**

Expenditure is complete, and the main work of gathering and analysing evidence and information about the USE system across the Faculty is done. It is expected to take a further year to 18 months to communicate, get agreement on, implement and bed down the recommended actions.

The anticipated actions for 2009 are listed below. These represent the project's major anticipated outcomes:

- An agreed, clearly written, user-friendly and principled Faculty-wide USE policy – readily accessible online – for Heads, Chairs and Unit of Study Coordinators (timeline to finalise is 12 months minimum, given time required for discussion in a range of Faculty fora).
- Increased communication about the principled use of USE results – with the focus on heightened awareness of promotions committees, PM&D supervisors, and the Faculty-at-large, about how USE results should be used to support quality teaching improvement (timeline 12 months)
- Online support for quality teaching and learning evaluation practices, based on Brookfield's 'four lenses', published on the new Arts Teaching and Learning website (anticipated 18 months, then ongoing development and maintenance)
- Plans developed to enable the T&L Network routinely to provide focused information to schools about USE results and faculty, school and department trends (anticipated 18 months)

**List any publications or seminar/conferences reporting on this project**

**To date:**

"Talking USEful Feedback: A Discussion with Arts Undergraduate Students" – transcript of an interview with Arts students facilitated by Dr Brigid Rooney & Dr Susan Thomas – published in *Synergy* 28 (November 2008): available from <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/synergy/article.cfm?articleID=340>

**Planned publication:**

Scholarly higher education publication about the project and its findings to be drafted and submitted to a relevant journal in the field (such as *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*) in the

second half of 2009

**Symposium**

Options currently under consideration include a mid-year, faculty-based symposium showcasing the peer evaluation of teaching scheme, led by an invited (possibly international) expert who can focus and challenge us on the importance of professorial involvement in such processes. We anticipate this would be of interest university-wide and could be advertised to that effect.

**What is the next step? How may project be replicated and best practice spread across the University?**

The project team will share its 2009 outcomes, as achieved, in various central university fora, including the Associate Deans and ITL Network. The project team has already benefited from advice both from this forum, and also from A/Dean Economics and Business who has shared examples of how communication about USE is working in that Faculty. We intend reciprocating by sharing the model of communication and implementation of USE we develop, which will be relevant for Faculties that are large, diverse and complex and organised according to a school-based structure. The model for encouraging peer observation of teaching among colleagues will also be of interest to other faculties.

**Project Representative**

Name	Dr Brigid Rooney
Signature	