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**COUNCIL OF AUSTRALASIAN UNIVERSITY
LEADERS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING**

CAULLT Grant Final Report, Part 2 (for publication)

**Enhancing inclusive and equitable quality education with hybrid
learning spaces in regional universities**

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Lead institution: Southern Cross University

Reference group members: Dr Amada Edgar, Deakin University and Associate
Professor Jennifer Stokes, University of South Australia

Project leader and contact details: Dr Polly Lai, polly.lai@scu.edu.au

Project members: Associate Professor Suzi Syme, Associate Professor Mandy
Shircore, and Professor Ruth Greenaway

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[Council of Australasian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching \(CAULLT\)](#)
secretariat@caullt.edu.au

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Project summary

In alignment with national priorities outlined in the *Future Made in Australia Act*, which emphasises the importance of delivering a high-quality and equitable education system (Albanese, 2024), regional universities continue to face challenges in ensuring consistent learning experiences for geographically dispersed students. Hybrid learning spaces offer a promising approach to reducing inequities between online and on-campus learners by enabling flexible access to high-quality teaching (Lightner & Lightner-Laws, 2016). However, despite their increasing adoption, there is limited empirical evidence to guide effective pedagogical design and capability building for hybrid learning environments (Raes et al., 2020).

This project addresses this gap by developing and evaluating a targeted, evidence-informed professional development (PD) program designed to strengthen university teachers' knowledge, confidence, and practice in hybrid pedagogy. The PD intervention comprises a 3-hour self-paced online and a 2-hour in-person workshop, supported by a comprehensive practical guide co-designed with learning designers, academic staff, students, and educational researchers. The project investigates the extent to which this PD model enhances staff capability and supports more equitable learning outcomes for students across delivery modes.

By producing a research-informed practical guide and a scalable PD module—underpinned by empirical pre- and post-intervention data—the project provides CAULLT member institutions with a transferable framework for hybrid teaching capability building. These outputs contribute to sector-wide efforts to strengthen teaching quality, support staff capability development, and improve the equity of student learning experiences in hybrid settings.

Methodology

The project employed a mixed-methods empirical design to evaluate the effectiveness of the hybrid teaching professional development (PD) program. Participants, who are academic staff from Southern Cross University, were invited to complete online surveys before and after engaging with the PD module. The pre-intervention survey (20–30 minutes) and post-intervention survey (approximately 40 minutes) assessed participants' knowledge of hybrid pedagogies, their ability to design effective hybrid learning environments, and their strategies for supporting equitable student engagement across modes.

Data collection incorporated three key sources: (1) pre- and post-survey responses, (2) hybrid teaching session plans, and (3) end-of-term unit feedback. Participants completed the pre-survey to gain access to the online module and were invited to complete the post-survey upon finishing the PD program. After delivering their hybrid classes, participants shared their pre- and post-intervention session plans with the research team to support analysis of changes in pedagogical design. Finally, once end-of-term feedback reports were released, participants provided these to the research team to enable examination of student success and satisfaction across online and on-campus cohorts.

This multi-source dataset allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of changes in teacher knowledge, hybrid teaching practice, and student learning outcomes associated with participation in the PD module.

Project findings

Although full empirical analysis is ongoing, the project has generated several clear early findings that inform hybrid pedagogy and professional development design.

1. Co-design strengthened the relevance and usability of the resources

The collaborative co-design workshops revealed authentic pedagogical, spatial, and technological challenges in hybrid teaching (Hill et al., 2024). These insights directly shaped the PD module and practical guide, ensuring strong alignment with staff needs. Early findings from this phase were disseminated at ASCILITE 2024 conference and have already gained scholarly attention.

2. Increased teacher knowledge and confidence in hybrid pedagogy

Preliminary survey data show that participants enhanced their understanding of hybrid teaching principles, particularly around designing equitable learning experiences for online and on-campus students. Teachers reported greater confidence in applying hybrid strategies following completion of the PD module.

3. Value of hands-on practice in hybrid spaces

Participants highlighted the in-person workshop as especially impactful. Direct engagement with hybrid classroom technologies enabled them to translate theoretical ideas into practical teaching strategies.

4. Early evidence of sector-wide relevance

Findings to date affirm the importance of structured professional development in supporting academic staff to adapt teaching practices for hybrid environments.

Project deliverables

The project delivered two major, evidence-informed outputs: (1) a comprehensive practical guide outlining effective pedagogical strategies for hybrid learning spaces, and (2) an online professional development (PD) module that integrates this guide to support university teachers in developing equitable hybrid teaching practices. Both deliverables were co-designed with learning designers, academic staff, students, and educational researchers, ensuring they address authentic challenges and practical needs identified in hybrid learning contexts. The PD module—comprising a 3-hour self-paced online learning component—aims to strengthen teachers' knowledge and confidence in designing and facilitating effective hybrid learning experiences.

As outlined in the initial CAULLT proposal, these deliverables also support the broader aim of enhancing consistent learning experiences for geographically dispersed students by strengthening the pedagogical design and technology-enhanced practices of participating educators. Together, the practical guide and PD module—supported by empirical analysis of pre- and post-intervention data—will offer CAULLT and its member institutions a scalable, research-based model for hybrid learning capability building, with demonstrated relevance and applicability across Australasian universities.

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