SNAPSHOTS OF PRACTICE: near horizons

A community of practice for teaching and leadership

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Academics in education-focussed roles can benefit from targeted professional learning to develop and evidence leadership capabilities (Marshall et al., 2011). Communities of practice are a well-established approach to academic development based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) exploration of apprenticeships and situated learning. In a social theory of learning participation in a community of practice is conceptualised through four interconnected elements: meaning (learning as experience), practice (learning as doing), community (learning as belonging) and identity (learning as becoming) (Wenger, 1998).

At Macquarie, the Teaching and Leadership 'academic job family' is a specialist role focused on pedagogic innovation, governance and leadership. It is typically 70% Teaching and 30% Leadership with appointments from Associate Lecturer to Professor. Almost one year ago, Macquarie's Learning and Teaching Staff Development team established a Teaching and Leadership Community of Practice. The open invitation read:

> *Contribute your ideas and experience to this community of practice to shape how we lead learning and teaching collectively and collaboratively across the university, provide input on professional development for leaders of learning and teaching and, at the same time, learn from your peers.*

The group of 78 members meets monthly via Zoom . Recent topics of discussion include pedagogy of kindness, workloads, engaging students online and evidencing teaching and leadership. This presentation showcases the group's discussions and dissemination of scholarship and practice in these areas.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marshall, S. J., Orrell, J., Cameron, A., Bosanquet, A. & Thomas, S. (2011) Leading and managing learning and teaching in higher education, Higher Education Research & Development, 30:2, 87-103.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

UOW's Blended Learning Enhancement Initiative: Supporting Reflective Practice and Purposeful Design

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In August 2021, the University of Wollongong launched a Blended Learning Enhancement Initiative (BLEI) that seeks to support the uplift of digital learning and teaching across UOW. Moving beyond emergency remote delivery, the initiative is underpinned by a strategic focus on the resilient and reflective pedagogies that drive learning and teaching excellence. The BLEI will build on the momentum of current good digital learning and teaching practices at UOW and cultivate the culture and strategic direction needed to drive digital transformation.

The initiative is core to developing a shared vision for blended learning at UOW and supporting the realisation of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan's transformative priority of Digitalisation and Goal 1 Empowering students for their future.

Over the next 18 months, the BLEI will launch a range of new support models, resources, tools and programs that promote reflective practice and the purposeful design of online learning environments and digital teaching and learning experiences. Specifically, the initiative seeks to uplift learning and teaching practices at UOW in five areas (enhancement domains) that have been identified through analysis of staff and student feedback.

- Online Learning Environment: A focus on improving the quality of the design of online learning environments (sites) within which digital learning and teaching practices take place for subjects and courses.
- Digital Learning And Teaching Experiences: A focus on the digital teaching and learning practices and interactions that take place in online learning environments
- Purposeful Video: A focus on the purposeful design and efficient use of video for learning and teaching.
- Learning Analytics: A focus on leveraging student interaction data for early interventions during session and site/subject/course redesign out of session.
- Assessment: A focus on assessment design and practices that support students in the development and demonstration of learning.

A key resource that will support the implementation of the BLEI is UOW's new Learning & Teaching Hub (L&T Hub). In response to the needs of UOW staff and the success of UOW's multi-award winning programs for supporting online teaching, the central Learning, Teaching & Curriculum division of UOW developed the L&T Hub as a long-term solution for accessing learning and teaching supports available to UOW staff. Supports include access to professional development events, articles, reflection tools, templates and a growing library of discipline-specific case studies of UOW staff sharing successful changes they have made to teaching practices across a range of delivery modes.

Two resources within the L&T Hub that support the BLEI's current focus on the Online Learning Environment enhancement domain are:

1. [UOW Subject Moodle Template](#) In response to staff and student feedback about the need for more consistent and user-friendly Moodle sites, Learning Teaching & Curriculum developed a Subject Moodle Template for staff use. The template has been designed to align with online learning environment standards, and has been refined in response to a 2020 pilot with UOW subject coordinators.
2. [Digital Uplift Check (DUC) Tool](#) The DUC tool has been designed to support the digital uplift of subject Moodle sites at UOW. It poses a range of questions that prompt reflection on aspects of

Moodle site design and assists with identifying opportunities for enhancement and access to relevant resources and support.

Limitless horizons: Towards a digital accessibility utopia

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At Deakin we are addressing the challenge of digital accessibility as an educational way of being that requires cultivation and building capabilities within our people. The belief underpinning this approach is that accessibility is an ongoing process, rather than a problem to be solved. Fundamentally, we have not sought to engage in a series of compliance exercises but have adopted a more well-rounded growth mindset. One that will empower our people to adopt and adapt with the fluidity of accessibility practices and approaches in a sustainable, sensible, and measured way. The approach we have taken is to seek out a passionate team of accessibility champions and wrap around them a leadership and mentoring program. In so doing, we offer a space where accessibility expertise can be nurtured and grown within our institution.