

Quality management of online learning environments

Final report of the project *Building distributed leadership in designing and implementing a quality management framework for online learning environments*

Final report 2014

Deakin University (Lead institution)

Associate Professor Dale Holt (Project leader)
Associate Professor Stuart Palmer
Mr James Quealy
Ms Judy Munro

Macquarie University

Associate Professor Ian Solomonides
Associate Professor Maree Gosper

RMIT University

Mr Amgad Louka
Dr Garry Allan
Mr Robert Hollenbeck

University of South Australia

Professor Margaret Hicks

University of Southern Queensland

Dr Michael Sankey

Report authors: Associate Professor Dale Holt, Associate Professor Stuart Palmer, Ms Judy Munro, Mr Amgad Louka, Dr Garry Allan, Mr Robert Hollenbeck, Associate Professor Ian Solomonides, Associate Professor Maree Gosper, Dr Michael Sankey and Professor Margaret Hicks.

www.deakin.edu.au/itl/research-eval/projects/alte-ole/index.php

Support for the production of this report has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.



With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and where otherwise noted, all material presented in this document is provided under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>.

Requests and inquiries concerning these rights should be addressed to:

Office for Learning and Teaching
Department of Education
GPO Box 9880,
Location code N255EL10
Sydney NSW 2001

<learningandteaching@deewr.gov.au>

2014

ISBN 978-1-74361-343-6 [PDF]
ISBN 978-1-74361-344-3 [DOCX]
ISBN 978-1-74361-345-0 [PRINT]

Acknowledgments

The project team would sincerely like to thank the many people without whose support, expert advice, knowledge and participation this project would not have achieved the level of success it has.

We would like to acknowledge the significant contributions made by the following people and organisations:

- The Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd (ALTC) for providing project funding
- The Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) for providing the governance around the project
- The project partner institutions: Deakin University, Macquarie University, RMIT University, University of South Australia, University of Southern Queensland
- Dr Di Challis, Challis Consulting, for facilitating the three focus groups and final round of targeted interviews
- Professor Lynne Hunt for performing the independent audit
- Ms Emily Partington, Deakin University, for processing project finances
- Ms Angela Carbone, RMIT University, for arranging rooms and conference facilities
- Ms Tracey Brighton and Ms Kim Atkinson, Deakin University, for assisting with and publishing the project website
- Mr Adam Finlay for providing professional editing services
- The members of the reference group for their inputs throughout the project:
 - Professor Brian Corbitt, Deputy PVC, Business Research, RMIT University
 - Professor Geoff Scott, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality), University of Western Sydney
 - Associate Professor Helen Carter, Manager, Educational Development Centre, Teaching and Learning Centre, Macquarie University
 - Associate Professor Philip Uys, Director, Strategic Learning and Teaching Innovation, Charles Sturt University
- Staff from each partner university who participated in the focus groups and targeted interviews
- Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning (ACODE) representatives who participated in the Quality Management Framework survey.

The project team



From left to right: Associate Professor Margaret Hicks, Mr Robert Hollenbeck, Dr Garry Allen, Dr Michael Sankey, Associate Professor Dale Holt, Associate Professor Stuart Palmer, Associate Professor Maree Gosper, Ms Judy Munro

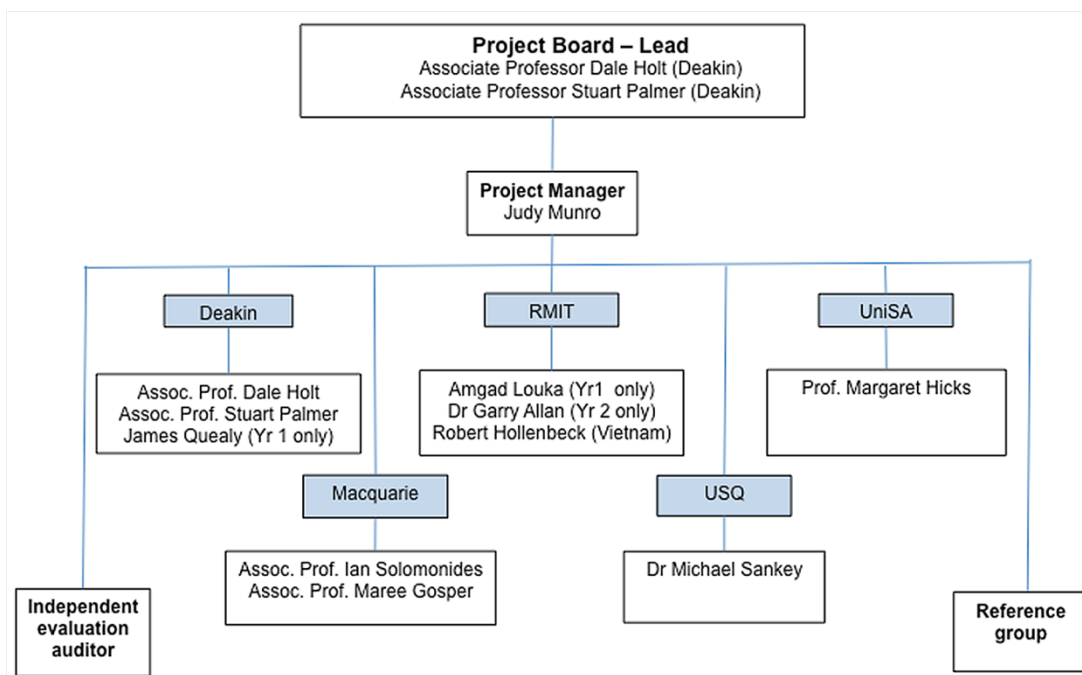


Figure 1: Project team structure

List of acronyms used

6EOLE	Six elements of the online learning environment
ACODE	Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd
ASCILITE	Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education
ATN	Australian Technology Network
AUSSE	Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CQI	Continuous quality improvement
DL	Distributed leadership
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
DVC(A)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
GCCA	Graduate Careers Council of Australia
Go8	Group of Eight
ICT	Information and communication technology
IRU	Innovative Research Universities
IT	Information technology
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LMS	Learning management system
NSSE	(US) National Survey of Student Engagement
OLE(s)	Online learning environment(s)
OLT	Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
RMIT	RMIT University
RUN	Regional Universities Network
SET	Student evaluation of teaching
SPNZ	South Pacific or New Zealand University
UniSA	University of South Australia
USQ	University of Southern Queensland

Executive summary

The project developed and disseminated, through a distributed leadership approach, an overall framework for the quality management of online learning environments (OLEs) in Australian higher education. The **Six Elements of the Online Learning Environment (6EOLE) Quality Management Framework** and its guidelines was constructed based on various data collection methods deployed in the project.

The 6EOLE Quality Management Framework, displayed on page six, and accompanying guidelines (i.e. *An evidence-based approach to implementation*, and *A condensed guide*) can be used to guide management action to assure and continuously improve the quality of an organisation's OLE where environmental factors are relatively stable, at least for a period.

The *Evidence-based approach to implementing the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework* is a comprehensive document containing the literature and evidence base, as well as guidance. The *Condensed guide* to building distributed leadership for the quality management of OLEs focuses on the tools required to put the evidence into practice. The term "guidelines" in this report encompasses both documents. The guidelines are available from the project's and the OLT's websites.

The Framework and guidelines are aimed at assisting leaders who wish to build distributed leadership capacity in their institutions to enable major renewal and transformation of their OLE to service strategic purposes. In relation to agendas of major organisational leadership change, the meaning, scope and characteristics of effective distributed leadership come to the fore.

The Framework and guidelines have not been designed to provide definitive solutions. Solutions must be designed and implemented in context. Australian universities are constituted in a variety of ways, and operate in a range of different environments. Frameworks can guide leadership actions but they can't determine them. Leaders can work in relative isolation to advance quality agendas but there will be limits to their effectiveness. This project highlights the value and benefits of cultivating shared or distributed leadership to overcome these limits and to advance major change agendas.

In stressing the commitment to building distributed leadership capacity for the quality management of OLEs we must highlight that any such commitment must begin at the top through the actions of senior leaders. They set the tone and style for the day-to-day workings of their institutions. They must act (and are acting) more assertively to position their organisations in national and international markets being profoundly shaped by digital developments and intensifying global competition. Engaging leadership is more likely to bring forward and use most productively the broadest range of people who can demonstrate effective leadership, whether they be in formal management positions or not. This is particularly the case in universities where staff located anywhere on the academic hierarchy, in formal positions of academic leadership or otherwise, can over periods make significant contributions to advancing the quality of OLEs. In fact, those closest to the teaching and learning action often have the most experience and traction to pursue innovation

Building distributed leadership to help advance serious agendas around organisational renewal and transformation is strongly shaped by a certain state of mind. This state of mind must exist amongst the most senior leaders in the institution. It is a state of mind that draws on the learning organisation metaphor; that is, the organisation that continually learns from its own actions to improve its overall performance. Building powerful distributed leadership is a key to achieving a high performing learning organisation in advancing the quality of OLEs.

This report shows how the project's objectives were achieved through the project approach and methodology, which in turn led to a set of project outcomes and key deliverables. Moreover, a consideration of these key outcomes and deliverables has led to the presentation of recommendations to the Office for Learning and Teaching and the higher education sector. We argue these recommendations are pertinent to the consideration of distributed leadership and the quality management of OLEs at any tertiary institution.

Methods used and reports written can be found along with other dissemination outputs on the OLE Quality Management project website:

www.deakin.edu.au/itl/research-eval/projects/alte-ole/index.php

The 6EOLE Quality Management Framework

The project has developed the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework to help with the task of leading and managing effectively an institution's online learning environment. The '6' and 'E' in the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework stand for the **six elements** presented, their various alignments and the key dimensions and characteristics of distributed leadership which have been foregrounded.

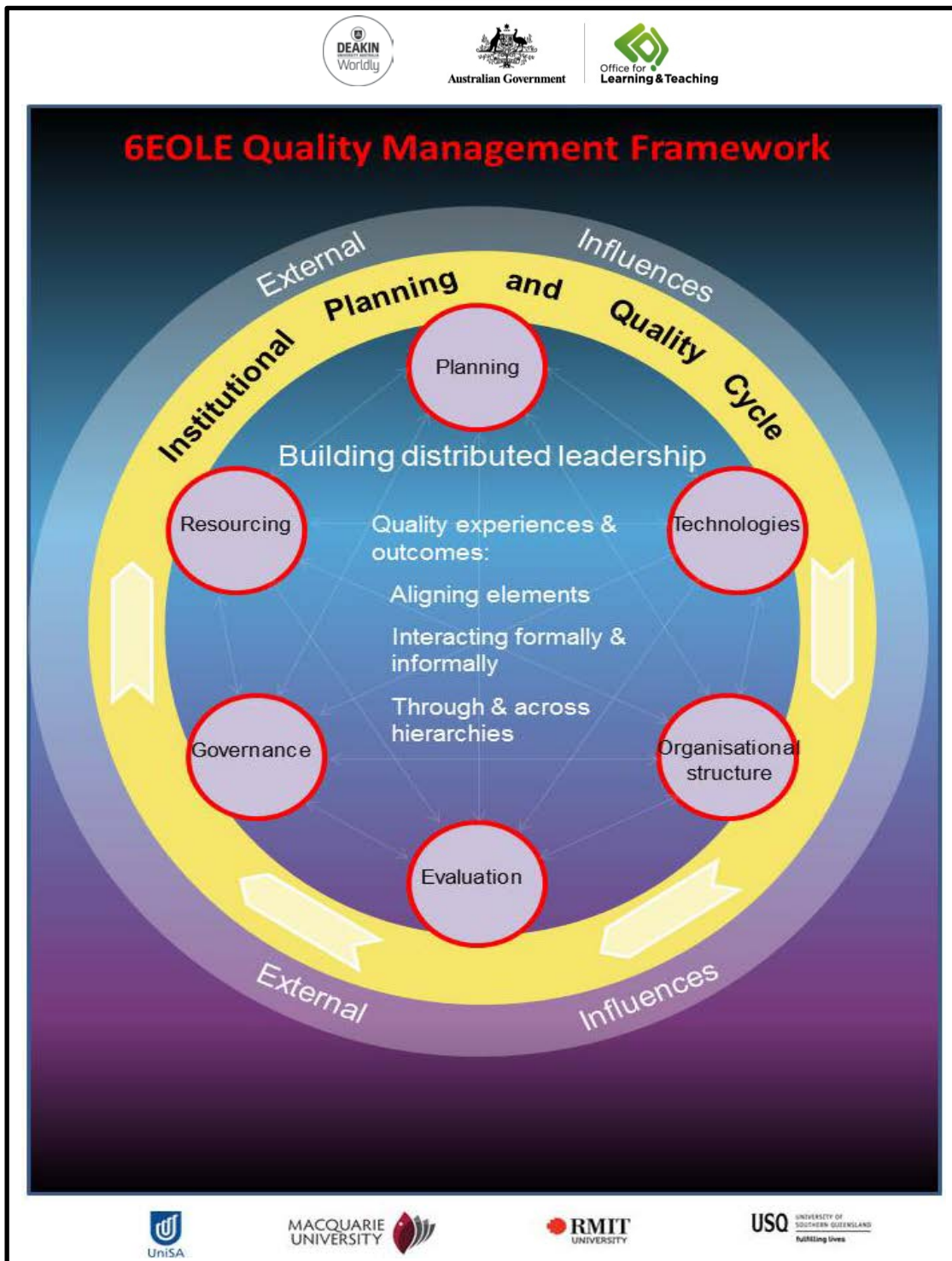


Figure 2: 6EOLE Quality Management Framework

The six elements

1. **Planning:** external environmental analysis and trend spotting, strategic intelligence gathering, external benchmarking, organisational capacity analysis, institutional purpose, reputation, vision, principles, objectives and strategies, accountabilities, timelines and resource implications
2. **Technologies (for teaching and learning):** type, range, integration, promotion, innovation, and mainstreaming of emerging technologies.
3. **Organisational structure:** nature, range, coordination and delivery of valued services (underpinned by clarity of understanding of needed expertise/staffing capabilities) for staff and students.
4. **Evaluation:** stakeholders' needs, methods, reporting, decision-making through governance structures, evaluation relating to the initial selection of new technology, and evidence gathering relating to the ongoing assessment of its performance, value and impact.
5. **Governance:** institutional, faculty and school/department committees and forums (and associated responsibilities and accountabilities), policies and standards.
6. **Resourcing:** maintenance and enhancement of technologies, skills recognition and staff development, media production, evaluation activities, governance mechanisms, i.e. all other elements.

The **institutional planning and quality cycle**, as represented in the Framework, is seen to represent ongoing planning, implementing, evaluating, reviewing and improving functions encapsulating all of the organisation's core business activities.

The checklists in the associated guidelines documents will assist organisational leaders and other users to manage the relationship among the elements effectively.

The Framework can be used to aid external benchmarking in the sector using existing standards and models.

Findings and recommendations

The project presents the following findings and recommendations to enhance the building of distributed leadership capacity in advancing the quality management of OLEs in Australian higher education:

1. **Senior leaders should be clear about their OLE strategy and share underpinning assumptions and expectations through various leadership avenues throughout the institution.**

Clarity of OLE strategy is now imperative. This is the responsibility of top-level leadership. Such strategy is shaped by business, financial and marketing concerns. Market share and reputation are critical senior leadership interests. External environmental factors and trends need strategic intelligence. These along with educational aspirations must be developed and shared throughout the organisation as the basis for advancing OLEs and the distributed leadership capacity required to realise strategic intent. All other factors in the Framework are shaped and aligned best when OLE strategy is clearly determined and communicated by senior leadership. Some exemplary communication strategies are highlighted in the guidelines documents.

2. **Senior leaders should be clear about how their OLE strategy relates to their overall teaching and learning direction and as related to the institution's continuous quality improvement processes.**

OLE strategy, whether standalone or integrated within a broader and more encompassing teaching and learning strategy, must be identifiable as a strategic domain of commitment, and be operationalised within organisational continuous quality improvement processes.

3. **Senior leaders should drive the development of high performing distributed leadership capacity to advance the quality of OLEs.**

Distributed leadership capacity can only be built effectively through a whole-of-institution approach well supported by those in the most senior formal leadership positions. The processes of organisational learning are becoming more important given the ongoing developments in information and communication technologies, including social media and cloud computing, and the dispersed nature of the impact of such developments in various disciplinary settings and institutional locations of learning. Distributed leadership is consistent with, and an important enabler of, organisational learning. Scattered, disjointed and disconnected efforts of those in various formal and informal leadership roles, at various levels of the organisation, will not advance the quality management of OLEs. All leaders must be able to locate their roles and contributions within an organisational frame of reference, as tied back to their OLE strategy.

4. **Well-aligned and high performing distributed leadership must be extended into the effective leadership of external partnerships to add value to OLEs.**

Building high performing distributed leadership capacity requires effective leadership of external partnerships to bring new value to OLEs. Such partnerships are the strategic responsibility of top management. Distributed leadership cannot operate in a closed internal environment, but must be open to connect with the leadership of valued external partnerships. Such partnering is now essential in the highly competitive and globalised world of OLEs.

- 5. The 12 approaches and strategies identified through the project should be used by senior leaders to assist in building distributed leadership capacity in a coherent and well-aligned way to advance the quality of OLEs.**

Developing well-aligned and effective distributed leadership capacity demands the implementation of multiple approaches and strategies at all levels and in all domains of the organisation's operations. These approaches and strategies must be framed by those in formal leadership positions. The project identified 12 such actions that can be implemented to achieve strong distributed leadership capacity. Single actions alone are unlikely to help. A suite of coordinated approaches and strategies are required under the umbrella of a clearly articulated OLE strategy.

- 6. The relationships between strategy, governance and evaluation need greater attention and much stronger alignment from organisational leaders to advance the quality management of OLEs.**

Project data collection revealed significant gaps in understanding from participants on the relationships amongst OLE strategy, the governance structures that operate to realise the strategy, and the types and ways in which evidence is collected to judge success and enhance decision-making for future advancements. Continuous quality improvement processes do not seem well developed and understood as applied to advancing the quality of OLEs. These crucial elements of the framework, and their interrelationships, need urgent attention. Committee structures need appropriate representation, including from those representing strategic external partners, and need to work effectively; that is, to make evidence-based decisions in accordance with overall strategic directions.

- 7. Organisational leaders need to strengthen institutional commitments to the systematic evaluation of OLEs, involve key stakeholders and ensure that evaluation findings are fed back through appropriate governance structures and localised communities of practice.**

Systematic institutional evaluation of OLEs was seen as a weak link in the overall chain of actions required to advance the quality management of such environments. Such evaluation is the prime indicator of the OLE's cost-effectiveness, a lead indicator of the institution's success in implementing its OLE strategy, and a useful guide to the development of a robust distributed leadership capability underlying the enabling of the whole enterprise. Evaluation approaches must be inclusive of all stakeholders, use well-developed data collection methods, and collect relevant data over good periods of time, encompassing timing horizons for the implementation of OLE strategies; the results of such activity must be fed back into governance structures to inform decision-making, and be cascaded through various leadership levels to inform academic teaching decisions on the ground.

Some exemplary communication strategies are highlighted in the guidelines documents.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	1
The project team	2
List of acronyms used	3
Executive summary.....	4
Recommendations	6
Tables and Figures	12
Tables.....	12
Figures	12
Project rationale	13
Project objectives.....	16
Project outcomes.....	17
Outcome 1: Literature reviews.....	17
Outcome 2: Development of the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework and accompanying guidelines	17
The 6EOLE Quality Management Framework.....	6
Approach and methodology	18
Approach	18
Methodology	20
Use and advance of existing knowledge.....	21
Selected factors influencing project outcomes	23
Success factors	23
Inhibiting factors.....	24
Implementation of project outcomes.....	25
Dissemination	26
Project website	26
Publications	26
Project posters.....	28
Conferences attended during the project.....	29
Linkages.....	30
Implementation of distributed leadership	31
Organisational culture	31
Distributed leadership and governance	32
Evaluation	33
Formative project evaluation	33
ACODE representatives survey.....	33

Independent audit.....	33
Summary of evaluation experiences	34
References	35
Appendix A: Alignment between elements of the Framework and ACODE e-Learning benchmarking standards	37
Appendix B: OLE Institutional Profile Matrix template	41
Appendix C: Summary profile of key dimensions of managing OLEs at partner institutions at project commencement	44
Appendix D: Learning technologies used across the sector	51
Appendix E: Reference group	61
Appendix F: ACODE representative evaluation instrument	62
Appendix G: Independent audit report	71

Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 1: Benefits of e-Learning: Drivers, approaches and metrics.....	19
Table 2: Summary of unique participants in focus groups and interviews	20
Table 3: Institutional groupings in Australasian higher education.....	30

Figures

Figure 1: Project team structure	2
Figure 2: 6EOLE Quality Management Framework	6
Figure 3: The ICT asset life cycle (Queensland Government Chief Information Office [Enterprise Architecture & Strategy], 2009).....	19

Project rationale

The project aimed at encompassing the range of information and communication technologies (ICTs) constituting an institution's OLE. Chief among these ICTs are learning management systems (LMSs), and their associated, indeed, integrated set of applications and tools. LMSs are perhaps currently the most widely used and most expensive educational technology tool (Salinas, 2008) and, like many other learning technology trends before them, have been adopted by higher education institutions almost automatically and uncritically (Reynolds, Treharne & Tripp, 2003). The choice of a particular system is a significant decision-making event shaping institutional approaches to ICT-enabled learning for a considerable period – for most institutions at least five years. Many university leaders have a stake in making and implementing such a choice, ranging across university senior executive members, leadership of central teaching, learning, media production and IT groups and through various levels of faculty academic leadership. The latter encompasses such leaders as Associate Deans Teaching and Learning, Heads of School and program and unit/course coordinators. Almost all staff in a university use and rely on LMSs in enabling student learning.

Having committed to a particular system, how do all of these leaders work together to maximise value, what types of data are collected at what levels of the organisation to assure and improve the quality of use, and how is evidence acted upon through the various decision-making structures of the institution? These questions illuminate the need to conceptualise and draw together the elements of a whole-of-institution approach to leading the quality management of the OLE, with their major focus on LMSs, and increasing need to take account of social networking environments. We believe that there are currently gaps and misalignments in various areas of designing and implementing such a quality management framework for OLEs in Australian higher education.

The vehicle for both designing and implementing such a framework is the building of distributed leadership capacity. Such a leadership capacity enables the development of the framework, and through the framework's implementation the further strengthening of this leadership approach. Distributed leadership has been defined as 'a distribution of power through the collegial sharing of knowledge, practice and reflection within the social context of the university' (Lefoe & Parris, 2008, p. 2). Building distributed leadership, therefore, requires that relevant leaders work collaboratively across functional domains and at various levels in the management hierarchy where there may be no official lines of reporting and accountability. This is an appropriate way of conceiving leadership and leadership capacity building for the purposes of the issues that were the focus of the project given that managing the quality of OLEs is a dispersed and shared responsibility of professional managers and academic leaders in many areas and at a number of levels of the organisation.

Relevant to the project is the importance of quality management systems, and their current state of underdevelopment in higher education, as highlighted by Fullan and Scott (2009). Turnaround leadership, Fullan and Scott argue, is dependent on the development of such systems, and a greater focus on outcomes and impact (as opposed to inputs). They also observe that:

... a focus on robust evidence is often not front and centre when it comes to making decisions about what most requires improvement and attention in universities, what their key strategic directions should be, or how well their core activities are currently working in practice. ... A university culture characterised by a commitment to continuous evaluation, inquiry, and quality improvement concentrates on using evidence to identify what aspects of its current provision are working well and what most needs enhancement (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 80).

We argue that effective leadership of OLEs is also dependent on such systems, with the associated focus on learning and teaching outcomes and impacts, and such systems are nowhere more important than in areas of greatest strategic importance and value to the institution: corporately supported LMS and associated e-Learning technology investments. We concur with Fullan and Scott (2009) that much greater commitment to systematic institutional evidence gathering and use is required in the area of OLE implementations. The Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning (ACODE) has developed benchmarks for e-Learning in universities and guidelines for use (ACODE, 2007). 'Benchmark 2: Planning for, and quality improvement of the integration of technologies for learning and teaching' is particularly relevant to this project. The meaning of this benchmark, a good practice statement and performance indicators follow:

Scoping statement

There is a need for institution-wide quality assurance processes to ensure the appropriate use of technologies in learning and teaching. This will include planning, implementation, evaluation and feedback loops.

Good practice statement

Institutions support and encourage the appropriate use of technology in learning and teaching through strategic planning processes at all levels of the institution. The focus is continuous improvement through systematic and regular evaluation of implementation strategies and outcomes. Such evaluation will in turn inform future planning.

Performance indicators

1. Institution-wide processes for quality assurance are in place and in use to integrate technologies in learning and teaching
2. Institution and faculty plans are aligned with institution policy for the use of technology in learning and teaching
3. Operationalisation is planned and evaluated
4. Planning and quality improvement is resourced
5. Collaboration for integrating technology in learning and teaching occurs across key functional areas
6. Evaluation cycles are in place to measure key performance indicators for all key stakeholders
7. Outcomes are reported to all levels of the institution
8. Evaluation feedback is integrated in planning for continuous improvement purposes

(ACODE, 2007, pp. 4–5)

We saw it as being timely to ascertain how universities are currently conducting planning, implementation, evaluation and feedback loops in the context of the new wave of decision-making on OLEs, including social networking developments. In developing future directions for OLE quality management, we also saw it as timely to ascertain how universities have conducted such activities over the last five years. The starting point was the identification of sources and methods of data collection that have occurred at various levels of the institution pertaining to OLE usage and value, and how such evidence has flowed through into planning, policy and actions to assure and improve the quality of learning and teaching.

Institutional surveying of staff and students' perceptions of the value of various functions of the OLE that Deakin University adopted in 2003 was undertaken over a three-year period. From a user perception perspective, this survey data collection provided indicators for action foci to improve staff and student satisfaction, and challenged one-size-fits all institutional policy regarding the use and support of OLE systems (Palmer & Holt, 2010). Since the time of this surveying, the OLE at Deakin has expanded beyond merely the LMS to encompass a portfolio of e-Learning technologies including a synchronous communications tool, a system for audio-visual recording of presentations for later online distribution via downloading, a set of social software tools, a third-party online service for checking the originality of submitted work, and others. Given both the intervening period and the expansion of the range of technologies now included in the OLE, there was a pressing need as supported by the project to update this information, as well as for establishing ongoing, systematic monitoring of the OLE (Sharpe, Benfield, Roberts & Francis, 2006). With the changing times comes a need to evaluate students' perceptions of value of e-Learning technologies in terms of their capacities to enable strong student engagement, quality learning experiences and quality learning outcomes (Coates, 2006). Evaluation of student satisfaction with technical-functional requirements now falls short of this need. More fundamentally, as the OLE has expanded from being solely an LMS to encompass a portfolio of e-Learning technologies, a key question arises regarding the best ways in which elements from the portfolio of technologies can be organised and combined into learning systems to improve learning (Gibbs & Gosper, 2006).

Project objectives

This project addressed the key question:

How does an Australian university best conceive and implement, through distributed leadership structures, a quality management framework for online learning environments?

In line with international developments, Australian universities have made very large investments in corporate educational technologies to support their commitments to online, open, distance and flexible education. LMSs have represented the focus of these institutional investments over the last decade or more. They contained the generic core administrative, communication, learning resource delivery and selected assessment functions required by universities and had become the main mechanism through which most institutions facilitated their online learning. These systems may have been proprietary or open source in nature (and sometimes commercially hosted outside the organisation).

At the beginning of the project, many Australian universities had recently reviewed, were reviewing or were soon to be reviewing their LMS technologies with a view to making decisions on the next generation of OLEs and developments. In addition, adjunct specialist applications were often integrated into such systems to provide a one-stop-shop for students and teachers. LMSs, and associated corporately supported e-Learning technologies, were seen by universities as 'mission critical' and, along with student, finance and human resource information systems, were considered as the most important IT investments made by the institution.

Running in parallel with these institutionally supported developments has been the growing use and importance of externally hosted social media/networking sites. These too were contributing to an enhanced learning experience and required increasingly careful attention within universities' leadership structures. Such developments accelerated over the duration of the project. This project focused on leadership of the quality management of such systems and sites.

The project identified, worked with and developed the capacities of a range of institutional leaders who carry responsibility for the choice and effective implementation of OLEs in the higher education sector. Their capacities were developed collaboratively, consistent with a distributed leadership approach.

The team who undertook this project represented a broad range of educational, technical, managerial and leadership expertise necessary to achieve the project aim and objectives. It represented the distributed leadership capacity building aspiration of the project.

The objectives of the project were to:

1. Consolidate literature and institutional experience on the key indicators of teaching, learning and leadership success in implementing OLEs from a whole-of-institution perspective
2. Design, use and evaluate a range of methods institutions can deploy in leading the assurance and improvement of the quality of OLEs in contributing to enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes
3. Determine appropriate alignments between OLE quality governance, management, institutional strategic and operational plans, and e-Learning technology policies
4. Model distributed leadership capacity building in supporting the development and use of the framework for quality management of OLEs in the sector, and, in particular, the contributions that teaching and learning centres and ICT centres can make to such forms of leadership and such systems of quality management

Project outcomes

Project outcomes have addressed all four project objectives. The outcomes are aligned with each of the objectives as follows:

Outcome 1: Literature reviews

Two literature reviews were produced:

- *Towards the development of an online learning environment quality management framework*
www.deakin.edu.au/itl/assets/resources/research-eval/projects/altc-ole/papers/occasional-paper-1.pdf
- *Distributed leadership in support of quality management of OLEs*
www.deakin.edu.au/itl/assets/resources/research-eval/projects/altc-ole/papers/occasional-paper-2.pdf

Objective 1: Consolidate literature and institutional experience on the key indicators of teaching, learning and leadership success in implementing OLEs from a whole-of-institution perspective.

Outcome 2: Development of the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework and accompanying guidelines

Objective 2: Design, use and evaluate a range of methods institutions can deploy in leading the assurance and improvement of the quality of OLEs in contributing to enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes.

Objective 3: Determine appropriate alignments between OLE quality governance, management, institutional strategic and operational plans, and e-Learning technology policies.

Objective 4: Model distributed leadership capacity building in supporting the development and use of the framework for quality management of OLEs in the sector, and, in particular, the contributions that teaching and learning centres and ICT centres can make to such forms of leadership and such systems of quality management.

Approach and methodology

Approach

The project's approach encompassed:

1. Action learning through distributed leadership
2. A contemporary view of quality management and systems in higher education
3. An ICT life cycle model
4. Current theorising on student learning experiences and student engagement
5. The framing of key areas of performance of OLEs.

First, the project adopted and developed a distributed action learning approach drawing in relevant leadership stakeholders at the various partner sites and at each stage of conceiving and implementing what we called the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework. This approach acknowledged that relevant leadership is dispersed up, down and across universities and that special distributed leadership mechanisms needed to be put in place to use such expertise to best effect for quality online learning and teaching. The action learning through distributed leadership approach was adopted to help build the OLE Quality Management Framework and be a key enabling mechanism for its implementation.

Second, the project adopted the view that a comprehensive model of quality in higher education, including online learning, should encompass both teaching (organisation-related aspects) and learning (student-related aspects), and include input, process and output factors for both areas (Oliver, 2003). The contemporary view of quality is that the ultimate measure of quality resides in the perceptions of the user (Crosby, 1995). This was a much more sophisticated view of quality than appealing to elegant designs or devising reliable systems for production and/or service delivery of IT. Another important idea from the contemporary conceptualisation of product quality was that all areas of an organisation contribute to the final quality of the services and products produced (Juran, 1988). Both for its own sake and in response to a competitive environment, we were also concerned with the improvement of quality. In the context of quality in higher education, many authors suggest the model of the 'learning organisation' as a way to move from a culture of compliance to improvement (Hodgkinson & Brown, 2003). A learning organisation is one that achieves both individual and collective learning through open and honest reflective practices based on objective information. Action research is presented as a quality improvement approach that embodies the learning organisation philosophy (Kekäle & Pirttila, 2006). Generally, action research seeks to improve/transform practice through the considered application of actions, objective evaluation of the outcomes and the continued refinement of our understanding of the factors at play in a given situation.

Third, as an ICT system or, more typically, as a collection of ICT systems, an OLE goes through a life cycle similar to any other ICT system. One comprehensive model of the ICT life cycle is given in Figure 3. Just as any area of an organisation may have an impact on the quality of its products/services, any phase of the ICT life cycle may have an impact on the quality performance of the OLE, as experienced by its many types of users. As an existing OLE reaches the end of its useful life, a new OLE life cycle for its replacement may commence and for a period run in parallel as the existing system is decommissioned. A comprehensive quality management model for an OLE would encompass/consider all stages of the ICT life cycle.



Figure 3: The ICT asset life cycle (Queensland Government Chief Information Office [Enterprise Architecture & Strategy], 2009)

Fourth, the project used theorising from work by Ramsden and Entwistle in Britain in the early 1980s. Their Course Perception Questionnaire established a link between students’ perception of their learning environment and their quality of learning (Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981). Subsequent work in Australia led to the development of the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), a version of which has been included in the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) national survey of graduates from 1993 onward. There is evidence that aspects of the CEQ may not be well suited to ‘unconventional’ teaching and learning environments (Lyon & Hendry, 2002); the CEQ contains no items that specifically refer to online aspects of the student experience; and a large analysis of open-ended comments in the CEQ made by more than 160,000 graduates from 14 Australian universities found that ICT did not figure highly in student ratings (Scott, 2006). More recently, the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) has gained some prominence (Coates, 2010). However, the AUSSE instrument contains only a handful of items specifically related to online aspects of student study, and it has a clear lineage from the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) which is rooted in a classroom-based, full-time, often residential model of education. While there appears to be little published work from Australasia that can make a link between institutional student evaluation of teaching (SET) data and the tangible contribution of OLEs (Bacsich, 2008), such SET data will nevertheless remain of key importance.

Fifth, to many the idea of applying quality concepts to aspects of education is anathema (Anderson, 2006); however, to move beyond transcendent conceptions of quality requires the specification of some process and/or output characteristics that can be measured. A UK Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) project to identify the ‘tangible benefits of e-Learning’ identified a range of OLE metrics that could be measured/assessed including, but not limited to effect on learning, effect on exam results, effect on student personal development, student satisfaction with e-Learning, innovation in teaching, staff satisfaction with e-Learning and influence on retention (Ferrell et al., 2007). Moreover, based on a large number of case studies from a wide range of disciplines in UK universities, JISC concluded that the appropriateness of particular metrics depend on the nature of the process or output factor(s) under consideration, as well as the e-Learning approaches being employed. They summarise this relationship in Table 1.

Nature of problem	Well defined	-	Complex
Evidence	Resource use	Effective pedagogy	Student engagement
Metric	Cost	Course pass rates	Student feedback
Driver	Rational	Pedagogic	Professional

Table 1: Benefits of e-Learning: Drivers, approaches and metrics

This project employed a range of quality measures that were appropriate to the circumstances of each partner case study. Along with these measures and sources, leadership in the project was informed by conceptions of student engagement, quality management, ICT life cycles and leadership as distributed capacity building.

Methodology

Overall, the project drew together relevant literature and findings from its various data collection phases.

At the commencement of the project in February 2011, each partner institution completed a profile matrix of managing OLE at their university covering a range of key dimensions. These dimensions were identified as being important by the project leader and were cross-referenced with the ACODE e-Learning benchmarking standards (see **Appendix A**). An OLE Institutional Profile Matrix template to undertake such an exercise can be referenced in **Appendix B**. A synthesis of these institutional profiles was undertaken. A summary profile of characteristics, commitments and approaches adopted by the partner institutions in managing their OLEs is presented, emphasising commonalities and differences (see **Appendix C**). Issues flagged in or emanating from these presentations are also highlighted. The value of these profile presentations, and the subsequent synthesis, formed the basis for the progressive development of the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework over the duration of the project.

Interested parties can use the template to undertake a beginning assessment of the status of various dimensions of their OLE, and compare their own assessment with the composite profiling generated by the project partners.

In April 2011, a technology profiling activity was undertaken to obtain information across the Australian higher education sector as to what learning technologies were used, the area responsible for the overall management of the OLE and the area responsible for the quality assurance of the OLE. **Appendix D** reports the findings.

Interested parties can use the template to undertake an assessment of the status of various technologies underpinning their OLE, and compare their own audit with information gathered across the sector.

After the completion of this information briefing stage, a mix of focus group, interview and survey methods was used to develop perspectives on the Framework and its accompanying guidelines. The survey of key representatives of the Australasian educational technology community received a high and representative response in gauging the relevance of the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework. Also, importantly, was the overall high number of different types of leaders who participated across the project's three focus groups and final round of interviews. We think the range and number of leadership participants who provided their views on issues raised provides greater weight to the advances of knowledge of the quality management of OLEs argued below.

Summary of unique participants in focus groups and interviews		
Deakin	22	Central 13, Faculty 9
Macquarie	30	Central 13, Faculty 17
RMIT	24	Central 13, Faculty 11
UniSA	21	Central 11, Faculty 10
USQ	18	Central 11, Faculty 7
Total unique participants	115	Central 61, Faculty 54

Table 2: Summary of unique participants in focus groups and interviews

Use and advance of existing knowledge

The project has drawn on partner experiences and benchmarking standards to identify **six elements** which need attention in the quality management of OLEs. In addition, and referring to the 7S McKinsey model of organisational change taken from the management literature (see e.g. Hayes 2010, p. 113), the project has mapped the myriad relationships amongst elements, and sought feedback from the Australasian educational technology community on the importance of the relationship between elements. The set of relationships amongst elements was located within an overall continuous quality improvement (CQI) cycle showing the need to consider each element, and its relationships with others, from the perspective of ongoing planning, implementing, evaluating, reviewing and improving CQI functions. We believe that the identification of the key elements, their interrelationships and their location within an overall CQI cycle has advanced knowledge of the field of quality management of OLEs. Importantly, this framing of OLE quality management helps leaders to understand how their actions might have unintended positive and negative consequences to the extent that deliberate changes to one or more of the elements might impact others in unanticipated ways (or at least call for a broader set of coordinated changes to those taken). A whole-of-institution approach to the quality management of OLEs requires a holistic understanding of interacting elements and their combined impact on shaping stakeholder experiences of the entire system.

The project, again drawing on the literature on leadership theorising with a focus on developments in distributed leadership (DL) in the educational sphere, has advanced knowledge by examining DL in the specific context of online learning technologies and their quality management in higher education. A whole-of-institution approach to DL capacity building in the context of technology-based learning environments in higher education represents a unique contribution to the sector and to the literature on DL. Synthesising findings from other ALTC/OLT funded projects relating to DL, the project defined the scope of DL, its dimensions and major characteristics of effective DL capacity building, again, as related to the field of OLEs in higher education. As with the elements, feedback from the Australasian educational technology community was sought on the importance of each of the characteristics, and the extent to which they were thought to be in evidence at the various institutions surveyed. This further advanced knowledge on practitioner concerns in valuing and using such a framework.

We would add a note of caution about the broad and direct use of the term ‘distributed leadership’ in the sector. While acknowledging its rich historical development, and the major bodies of knowledge about it, particularly emanating from the secondary schools sector, we did find that many of our project participants struggled to readily grasp its meaning. Simple definitions, often required in introductions to focus groups, interviews and surveys, can be misleading. They can be so general as to potentially bring any line of leadership theorising and action within their remit. However, when detail is required, definitions can quickly become so elaborate that they lose their value. What is then required is a thorough read of the broad ranging literature. We concluded that many participants feel comfortable discussing the ways in which leaders go about enhancing the quality of their OLEs. Some used the terms ‘effective’, ‘shared’, ‘dispersed’, ‘networked’ or ‘collaborative’ as alternatives to ‘distributed’ in discussing their leadership approaches and styles. As reported by the project’s qualitative researcher on the final round of interviews conducted on the issues of OLE change management and distributed leadership:

As the discussions progressed, it became apparent that distributed leadership was not generally regarded as a conscious and hence explicit enactment of an espoused commitment to this ethos. Rather, actions that are congruent with this ethos have been taken that, on reflection, and with this as the stated philosophical construct, can reasonably be construed as aligned with a DL mode.

Irrespective of the orientations adopted and terms used, what is often said or inferred from such discussions is the need for leaders to work together, the need for leaders to work through and across hierarchies, and the need for leaders to extend their actions to the external world of partnerships. What also becomes apparent is the acknowledgment of the broad range of parties that demonstrate leadership, whether they are highly or lowly placed in management hierarchies, or whether they are even placed in a formal leadership role at all. We observe that such reflection leads us to deeper understandings of distributed leadership, namely its nature, scope, characteristics, benefits and limits. Additionally, reflections on how to build *leadership* capacity in this domain also inevitably provide indicators on how to do this in ways which advance *distributed* leadership capacity, as often the approaches and strategies proposed involve a broad range of leaders effectively interacting with each other in different ways, in different domains and at different levels, the overall effect of which is superior leadership performance in managing the quality of OLEs. These emerging understandings locate distributed leadership within the context of the learning organisation, and the rich and complex network of 'leaders' that can be generated to contribute to the quality management of OLEs.

The second definitional concern worth highlighting in using and advancing knowledge in the field is that between management and leadership. Our project was about the quality *management* of OLEs through building distributed *leadership* capacity. A number of project participants wished to see a clear distinction drawn between management and managers, and leadership and leaders. Such conventional dichotomies do appear in the literature and other ALTC leadership reports. Simply put, leadership and leaders are about orchestrating major organisational change, while management and managers are focused on more routine matters relating to the good governance of the organisation in a steady state. Both sets of capabilities are acknowledged as important. In acknowledging this division, we have promoted our 6EOLE Quality Management Framework as being relevant to the management task of ongoing quality assurance (QA) and continuous quality improvement (CQI). We have also promoted the Framework, and the emphasis on building distributed leadership, as helpful in guiding major organisational change around OLEs. Having said this, the need to separate and define the meanings of management and leadership in this context can be confusing for participants and readers. We think an integrated definitional approach would be more productive for those who undertake future OLT national leadership projects. Such an integrated approach would see leadership as much a part of management and management as much a part of leadership, with both sets of capabilities required of the contemporary leader/manager. Hence, greater emphasis could be placed on uniting these roles, and less on dividing them. As observed by Dourado (2007, p. 58 & p. 59):

Manager or leader? Which are you expected to be?

This particular question is a dead man walking. It should have been buried and forgotten years ago. But people are slow to let go of ideas. ***The essential truth is that management and leadership are different modes, but managers and leaders are the same people.*** And, as an important aside, people without 'manager' in their job title are often leaders too. With flatter hierarchies, you need managers at all levels who can act as leaders.

Selected factors influencing project outcomes

The project involved a significant number of cross-institutional team members contributing a range of expertise. The project also required leadership distributed amongst the partners to achieve its objectives, with overall project leadership and management emanating from the lead institution, Deakin University. The project dynamic embodied a set of enablers and inhibitors, as is to be expected in any major undertaking of this nature. On balance, the enablers overcame any inhibitors, with the project being judged successful in achieving its objectives through its list of outcomes.

Success factors

The following factors contributed to the success of the project and its completion within the agreed timeline and budget:

- Interest and enthusiasm of team members from the five institutions
 - Deakin University (lead)
 - Macquarie University
 - RMIT University
 - University of South Australia
 - University of Southern Queensland
- Continuity of the majority of team members throughout the life of the project
- Employing a project manager who possessed a sound knowledge of relevant issues and advanced skills in project management, project reporting and budgetary control
- Exemplary leadership by the project leader
- Skill and experience mix of team members from the five partner institutions
- Regular fortnightly full team meetings with formal agenda and minutes
- Regular fortnightly meetings of the Deakin team members to discuss more specific issues revolving around their leadership and project management roles
- Having a clear understanding of the contribution which would be made by partner institutions
- Clear roles, responsibilities and tasks assigned to each team member
- Clear assigning of data collection tasks, with deadlines, as overseen by project leadership, and with continuity of use of an external experienced evaluation consultant to run, analyse, interpret and write-up all focus group discussions and targeted interviews over the life of the project
- Project conferences dispersed throughout the project in which the team met face to face (February 2011, November 2011, September 2012)
- Ongoing sharing of information and provision of updates via email
- A supportive team environment
- Carefully handling the various ethics applications associated with the project ensuring a shared understanding of these and compliance with all requirements
- Good management of the focus group and survey evaluation cycles and timelines, and timely completion of staged deliverables.

Inhibiting factors

The project team experienced the following inhibiting factors:

- Changes in senior organisational leadership at the lead institution, and associated changes in strategic direction and restructuring of relevant central operations which spanned most of the project life
- The opportunities to trial different approaches in different institutional contexts, but lack of overall opportunity to fully trial the whole Framework across all partner institutions
- Early in the project, a team member moved jobs and was unable to continue participating in the project
- Just after Year 1, a team member moved jobs and was unable to continue participating in the project. However, this team member was replaced by another who was able to add significant value to the project.

Implementation of project outcomes

The project outcomes (or know-how) have been captured and are being disseminated through its 6EOLE Quality Management Framework and guidelines to good practice. Various aspects of the Framework were implemented in different partner contexts. For example, at the lead institution, Deakin, an institutional approach was adopted to evaluating the University's overall OLE, and, in particular, the implementation of its new LMS, which fortuitously occurred during the duration of the project.

Full implementation of the Quality Management Framework uniformly across all partners proved unfeasible. The initial profiling of each partner's approach to various issues relating to the quality management of their OLE at the beginning of the project showed that they were at various points in their OLE life cycle. Some of the partners were well into the implementation of a new LMS, and had, at the time, quite stable governance and budgeting systems. Another partner was on the verge of implementing its new LMS and, while other elements were initially reasonably well understood and stable, it quickly became apparent that a major wave of strategic and structural change was to wash over the institution, throwing in the air the meaning of, and relationships amongst, all aspects of the Quality Management Framework. Consequently, it became readily apparent in the initial phase of the project that all the partners were not on the same starting line. While this may have represented a limitation, the different starting points, experiences and operating environments generated a rich and wide range of perspectives, which shaped the development of the Framework. Importantly, the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework was completed, with accompanying guidelines, by the end of the project, ready for implementation post-project completion.

Dissemination

The project has adopted a number of channels for disseminating project outcomes (listed below) and used a variety of communications media to disseminate findings at key completion milestones. The project's recommendations highlight major areas where further investigation, development and dissemination are required.

Project website

A project website has been developed detailing the project management governance, timeline, project outputs, reporting, dissemination and evaluation aspects of the project:

<www.deakin.edu.au/itl/research-eval/projects/altc-ole/index.php>

The project website contains substantial primary source material relevant to the project objectives, outcomes, methodology and approaches. It is integral to supporting ongoing efforts to disseminate project findings and representing the project's underlying evidential base.

Publications

The following are publications from the project and can be found on the project website:

<www.deakin.edu.au/itl/research-eval/projects/altc-ole/dissemination.php>

Publication	Type	Author/s	When
Towards the development of an online learning environment quality management framework	Literature review	Associate Professor Stuart Palmer, Deakin University	April 2011
Distributed leadership in support of quality management of OLEs	Literature review	Associate Professor Dale Holt, Deakin University	April 2011
Models for online, distance, blended and flexible education	Position paper	Associate Professor Maree Gosper, Macquarie University	April 2011
Evaluating and researching the impact of online learning environments (OLEs)	Position paper	Associate Professor Ian Solomonides, Macquarie University	April 2011
Summary profile of key dimensions of managing online learning environments (OLE) at partner institutions at project commencement	Profile	Project team, Ms Judy Munro, Deakin University	2011
Online technologies audit across the Australian higher education sector	Profile	Ms Judy Munro, Deakin University	2011

Publication	Type	Author/s	When
Leading an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder approach to evaluating the implementation of a new online learning environment: an Australian institutional case study	Academic paper, ASCILITE	Associate Professor Dale Holt, Associate Professor Stuart Palmer, Dr Mary Dracup, Deakin University	December 2011
Leading the quality management of online learning environments in Australian higher education	Academic paper, AJET	Associate Professor Dale Holt, Deakin University, and project team	March 2012
Leading the evaluation of institutional online learning environments for quality enhancement in times of change	Academic paper, ASCILITE	Associate Professor Maree Gosper, Macquarie University	June 2012
An evidence-based approach to implementing the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework	Guidelines	Project team	November 2012
A condensed guide to building distributed leadership for the quality management of online learning environments	Guidelines	Project team	November 2012

Project posters

Project posters were developed to graphically represent the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework and its descriptors and characteristics.



6EOLE Quality Management Framework

The diagram illustrates a circular 'Planning and Quality Cycle' with five main elements: Planning, Resourcing, Governance, Evaluation, and Technologies. These elements are interconnected by arrows, forming a continuous loop. The cycle is set against a background of 'Building distributed leadership' with sub-points: 'Quality experiences & outcomes', 'Aligning elements', 'Interacting formally & informally', and 'Through & across hierarchies'. The cycle is framed by 'External Influences' at the top and bottom.

Distributed Leadership

Element descriptors

Planning: external environmental analysis and trend spotting, strategic intelligence gathering, external benchmarking, organisational capacity analysis, institutional purpose, reputation, vision, principles, objectives and strategies, accountabilities, timelines and resource implications

Organisational structure: nature, range, coordination and delivery of valued services (underpinned by clarity of understanding of needed expertise/staffing capabilities) for staff and students

Governance: institutional, faculty and school/department committees and forums (and associated responsibilities and accountabilities), policies and standards

Technologies: type, range, integration, promotion, and innovation and mainstreaming of emerging technologies

Resourcing: maintenance and enhancement of technologies, skills recognition and staff development, media production, evaluation activities, governance mechanisms, i.e. all other elements

Evaluation: stakeholder needs, methods, reporting, decision making through governance structures, evaluation relating to the initial selection of new technology, and evidence gathering relating to the on-going assessment of its performance, value and impact

Characteristics

- Enabled individual and collective agency,
- Co-created & shared vision,
- Inclusive of all those who lead,
- Broadest recognition of leadership,
- Communicative and engaging,
- Appropriate responsibilities,
- Meaningful rewards,
- Trusting and respectful,
- Collaborative in development,
- Nurturing of valued professional expertise,
- Valuing professional forums & communities,
- Continuity and sustainability.

Conferences attended during the project

The following conferences were attended / presented at during the project:

Conference	When	Where	Attendees	Level of participation
OLE Project Conference 1	8–9 Feb. 2011	RMIT University, Melbourne	Project team	Initial team face-to-face and planning day
Deakin University Teaching and Learning Conference	2–3 Nov. 2011	Deakin University, Melbourne	Associate Professor Dale Holt, Associate Professor Stuart Palmer, Mr James Quealy, Ms Judy Munro	Poster presentation
OLE Project Conference 2	22–23 Nov. 2011	RMIT University, Melbourne	Project team	Face-to-face project meeting (with reference group and focus group facilitator)
Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE)	4–7 Dec. 2011	Hobart	Project team	Workshop, paper presentations and poster presentation
Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning (ACODE)	28–29 Jun. 2012	Swinburne University, Melbourne	Dr Michael Sankey, Dr Garry Allan, Associate Professor Maree Gosper	Workshop and discussion
OLE Project Conference 3	4–5 Sep. 2012	RMIT University, Melbourne	Project team	Third and final face-to-face project meeting (with reference group)

Linkages

The project created a major linkage with the Australasian educational technology community as represented by the Australasian Council on Open Distance and E-learning (ACODE). Their views on the draft Framework were sought through surveying. A total of 46 current ACODE institutional representatives were publicly identifiable, and were invited to participate in the online survey (see **Appendix F**). Fully completed survey responses were received from 27 of the 46 current ACODE institutional representatives, a response rate of 58.7%. However, an additional four incomplete responses were also received. Because the online survey system used saved all data progressively, some of the data and analyses presented contained responses from up to 31 (67.4%) respondents.

Table 3 lists the 48 principal universities in Australasia, and the 46 institutions for which an ACODE representative was publicly identifiable for the purposes of the survey are indicated with shading. The universities listed were classified according to the generally understood institutional groupings of:

- South Pacific or New Zealand University (SPNZ)
- Group of Eight (Go8)
- Innovative Research Universities (IRU)
- Australian Technology Network (ATN)
- Regional Universities Network (RUN)
- Non-aligned / No grouping.

1. South Pacific or New Zealand (SPNZ)	4. Australian Technology Network (ATN)
Auckland University of Technology Lincoln University Massey University University of Auckland University of Canterbury University of Otago University of the South Pacific University of Waikato Victoria University of Wellington	Curtin University Queensland University of Technology RMIT University University of South Australia University of Technology, Sydney
2. The Group of Eight (Go8)	5. Regional Universities Network (RUN)
The Australian National University Monash University The University of Adelaide The University of Melbourne The University of New South Wales The University of Queensland The University of Sydney The University of Western Australia	Central Queensland University Southern Cross University University of Ballarat University of New England University of Southern Queensland University of the Sunshine Coast
3. Innovative Research Universities (IRU)	6. Non-aligned / No grouping
Charles Darwin University Flinders University Griffith University James Cook University La Trobe University Murdoch University The University of Newcastle	Australian Catholic University Bond University Charles Sturt University Deakin University Edith Cowan University Macquarie University Swinburne University of Technology University of Canberra The University of Notre Dame Australia University of Tasmania University of Western Sydney University of Wollongong Victoria University

Table 3: Institutional groupings in Australasian higher education

The completed *Report on the Survey of ACODE Institutional Representatives at Australasian Universities* (Palmer, 2012) was circulated to all ACODE representatives.

Some of the project members then attended an ACODE forum and facilitated discussion on the key findings to further strengthen the linkage. The following feedback was received at the forum and was then used in constructing the final framework guidelines.

Implementation of distributed leadership

- Implementation of DL was seen to be challenging and the question was posed as to how one can take DL into an organisation. So the question was raised: How do you introduce such a framework into an institution, and, in particular, when there are limited distributed leadership opportunities?
- As part of the project, it would be useful to provide models of what an effective DL network would look like. In other words, how would you action the framework?
- It was observed that DL is all about people. Thus, the implementation of DL is highly people dependent. It was observed that Associate Deans played a key role in doing this.
- It was noted that a DL champion at a higher level in the institution is needed. The suggestion was made that this should be at PVC rather than at DVC level.
- A mechanism to mentor DL within projects can help at the outset.
- A difference was noted between delegated and distributed leadership.
- A suggestion was made that there are a number of exemplars of distributed leadership already in place in the sector. There was also interest in promoting the concept of *distributive* leadership: leadership that is delegated.
- For successful implementation, developing rhetoric and argument is needed to convince those in power to follow such a model. For example, within the quality management of operations at one university it was observed that any opportunity for distributed leadership could not be seen.
- Project findings could be linked to special events run by ACODE from time to time.

Organisational culture

- Where does DL fit with enterprise architecture that can seduce senior managers? If it is not endorsed and embedded somehow, it can be seen as the latest 'bright shiny new thing'.
- DL can represent a clash of cultures, particularly when issues of accountability arise: who is responsible? This can be seen in relation to quality; for example, a DVC interested in external accountability.
- On the ground quality is more about enhancement, working together.
- The dynamic is so personal/people dependent, and this implies that the framework is greatly affected by the individuals.
- Possibly, we focus too much on sustaining systems when it is the people themselves that affect things greatly.

Distributed leadership and governance

- DL implies a community of practice. How does this relate to formal governance structures?
- Leadership can be conflated with management – in practice it can be hard to differentiate between the two; hence, there can be a tension between DL (which is collegial) and management (which is more hierarchical).
- Potentially the framework could assist a DVC(A) who was trying to build a governance structure from scratch. Such a DVC(A) would require evidence that the framework works.
- How does the framework relate to governance structures? The quality management cycle is really the remit of governance bodies. Perhaps the definition of leadership needs to be clearer.
- A champion (within an institution) is required for a framework to be sustained through time in the institution.
- How is the action of the DL framework different to a well-established, or formal, governance structure?
- Governance represents stakeholders and is outside organisational management. There is a need for formal governance structures to make sure DL is being enacted effectively. Problems can arise when there is no governance structure.

Evaluation

The project team committed to a variety of evaluation approaches and methods in support of achieving the project objectives. This has involved ongoing formal evaluation through timely, well-organised team meetings and milestone conference events, a series of focus groups and a comprehensive strategy of surveying educational technology leaders from Australian and New Zealand universities. Experiences with these evaluation endeavours are reported below.

Formative project evaluation

Throughout the life of the project, various activities and tasks were undertaken to enable the project to achieve its objectives through careful reflection and fine-tuning of actions:

- Two sets of team meetings were convened:
 - A fortnightly full-team meeting to discuss formal agenda items, status of tasks, timelines, budget and task allocation; these meetings, conducted via conference phone, were minuted and minutes were distributed to all team members
 - A fortnightly Deakin team member meeting to discuss strategies, risk management, contingencies and tasks more pertinent to the lead institution
- Monthly progress reports were developed and distributed to all team members for review and feedback
- The project reference group was provided with the monthly project progress reports and was encouraged to provide feedback. A list of reference group members is found in **Appendix E**
- Documents pertaining to project deliverables and required timelines for delivery against status of project were reviewed in team meetings
- Three project conferences were run (February 2011, November 2011, September 2012) to provide an opportunity for a face-to-face meeting of all team members. The conference programs included each partner institution being given the opportunity to present on key topics, issues for resolution and key findings. The project reference group participated in these project conferences by way of a conference call.

ACODE representatives survey

As reported above, an ACODE representative survey instrument (administered via Opinio software) was used to collect views on the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework, its elements, alignments and importance. Various findings from this report are included in the guidelines. The survey instrument is included as **Appendix F**.

Independent audit

An independent audit was conducted by Professor Lynne Hunt. The audit report is included as **Appendix G**.

Summary of evaluation experiences

- Good team participation is important, although individual contributions might vary over time depending on other professional and personal demands and circumstances.
- Energetic team leadership is important to sustain motivation and focus on project outcomes.
- Effective project management is the key to ensuring evaluation commitments are followed through.
- Data collection stages must be completed on time and quality reports produced and made available to help inform the next stage(s) of project.
- Regular project meetings and milestone events are key forums for sharing expert views and experiences in the management of OLEs. They enable formative evaluation to be sustained over the life of the project.

References

- Anderson, G. (2006). Assuring quality/resisting quality assurance: Academics' responses to 'quality' in some Australian universities. *Quality in Higher Education*, 12(2), 161–173.
- Australasian Council on Open Distance and E-learning. (2007). *ACODE benchmarks for e-learning in universities and guidelines for use*. Canberra: ACODE.
- Bacsich, P. (2008). *Costs of E-Learning Scoping Exercise: Report*. JISC. Retrieved 29 October 2012, from the World Wide Web: www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/committees/ilt/27/24b_cost_benefits_elearning.pdf
- Coates, H. (2006). *Student Engagement in Campus-based and Online Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Coates, H. (2010). Development of the Australasian survey of student engagement (AUSSE). *Higher Education*, 60(1), 1–17.
- Crosby, P. B. (1995). *Quality is Still Free: Making Quality Certain in Uncertain Times*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dourado, P. (2007). *The 60 Second Leader: Everything You Need To Know About Leadership, In 60 Second Bites*. Chichester, Hoboken, NJ: Capstone.
- Ferrell, G., Kelly, J., MacMahon, C., Probert, S., Quentin-Baxter, M. & Riachi, R. (2007). *CAMEL Tangible Benefits of E-Learning Project: Final Report*. London: JISC.
- Fullan, M. & Scott, G. (2009). *Turnaround Leadership for Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gibbs, D. & Gosper, M. (2006). The upside-down-world of e-learning. *Journal of Learning Design*, 1(2), 46–54.
- Hayes, J. (2010). *The Theory and Practice of Change Management*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hodgkinson, M. & Brown, G. (2003). Enhancing the quality of education: A case study and some emerging principles. *Higher Education*, 45(3), 337–352.
- Juran, J. M. (1988). The quality function. In J. J. M. & F. M. Gryna (Eds.), *Juran's Quality Control Handbook* (4th ed., pp. 2.1–2.13). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kekäle, J. & Pirttila, I. (2006). Participatory action research as a method for developing leadership and quality. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9(3), 251–268.
- Lefoe, G. & Parris, D. (2008). *The Green Report: Growing, Reflecting, Enabling, Engaging, Networking – Final Report*. Strawberry Hills: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.
- Lyon, P. M. & Hendry, G. D. (2002). The use of the course experience questionnaire as a monitoring evaluation tool in a problem-based medical programme. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27(4), 339–352.
- Oliver, R. (2003). *Exploring Benchmarks and Standards for Assuring Quality Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 16th Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia Biennial Forum. Retrieved 29 October 2012, from the World Wide Web: <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks/3279/>
- Palmer, S. (2012). *Report on the Survey of ACODE Institutional Representatives at Australasian Universities*. Geelong, Vic.: Deakin University. Retrieved 13 November, from the World Wide Web: www.deakin.edu.au/itl/assets/resources/research-eval/projects/altc-ole/evaluation/acode_final_report.pdf
- Palmer, S. & Holt, D. (2010). Students' perceptions of the value of the elements of an online learning environment: Looking back in moving forward. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 18(2), 135–151.
- Queensland Government Chief Information Office (Enterprise Architecture & Strategy). (2009). *Asset Lifecycle – Draft 0.0.4*. Brisbane: Queensland Govt Chief Information Office.
- Ramsden, P. & Entwistle, N. J. (1981). Effects of academic departments on students' approaches to studying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 51(3), 368–383.
- Reynolds, D., Treharne, D. & Tripp, H. (2003). ICT – the hopes and the reality. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 34(2), 151–167.
- Salinas, M. F. (2008). From Dewey to Gates: A model to integrate psychoeducational principles in the selection and use of instructional technology. *Computers & Education*, 50(3), 652–660.
- Scott, G. (2006). *Accessing the Student Voice – Using CEQuery to identify what retains*

students and promotes engagement in productive learning in Australian higher education. Barton, ACT: Department of Education, Science and Training.

Sharpe, R., Benfield, G., Roberts, G. & Francis, R. (2006). *The Undergraduate Experience of Blended E-Learning: A review of UK literature and practice.* York: The Higher Education Academy.

Appendix A: Alignment between elements of the Framework and ACODE e-Learning benchmarking standards

Strategic and operational plans

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 1: Institution policy and governance for technology supported learning and teaching

Scoping statement: This applies to institution level planning, policy development and implementation in relation to the application of technologies for learning and teaching. It includes the delegation of authority and responsibility for developing, implementing, evaluating and responding to results of policies and strategic and operational/functional plans.

Questions

What role does your OLE play in your university's business strategy? By this we mean the development and/or enhancement of your various student markets?

What factors in the external environment do you see as shaping your university business strategy as related to your OLE up to now and into the future?

Do you have a vision for your OLE at your institution? If so, what process did you undertake to develop and implement it?

What values and beliefs about learning and teaching are embodied in your institution's vision?

Models for online, distance, blended and flexible education

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 4: Pedagogical application of information and communication technology

Scoping statement: This topic addresses the effective application of information and communication technology (ICT) to support institution learning and teaching. It encompasses the underlying rationale and strategic intent, how it is embedded in institution teaching, how it is resourced and how it is evaluated. The pedagogical application of ICT is a developing area that has the potential to impact on every student and staff member, and failure to apply ICT in pedagogically sound ways will reduce the value of infrastructure investment, and may detract from the ability of the institution to meet its teaching and learning goals.

Questions

How would you describe your overall strategy as related to your OLE in relation to commitments to what has been variously defined as online education, distance education, blended learning and flexible education?

How is your OLE managed in relation to what you see as the best way of describing it from the above list of approaches to online learning and teaching?

What principles do you use to integrate various ICTs constituting your OLE into your university's course curricula?

Policies and codes of conduct

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 1: Institution policy and governance for technology supported learning and teaching

Scoping statement: This applies to institution level planning, policy development and implementation in relation to the application of technologies for learning and teaching. It includes the delegation of authority and responsibility for developing, implementing, evaluating and responding to results of policies and strategic and operational/functional plans.

Questions

What plans and policies do you have to enable the effective implementation of your OLE-supported business strategy and market positioning? What is the purpose of such plans and policies, and how do you know they are being adhered to throughout the institution?

To what extent do and should your policies on OLE design and use promote standardisation and consistency across the institution as opposed to recognising and nurturing legitimate course, unit and discipline variation?

OLE governance

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 1: Institution policy and governance for technology supported learning and teaching

Scoping statement: This applies to institution level planning, policy development and implementation in relation to the application of technologies for learning and teaching. It includes the delegation of authority and responsibility for developing, implementing, evaluating and responding to results of policies and strategic and operational/functional plans.

Questions

What is the rationale for and principles underlying your OLE governance structures? (Two aspects of your governance structure might be considered in response to the question, namely: decision-making in relation to the educational dimensions of your OLE; and decision-making in relation to the choice and deployment of the ICTs constituting your OLE.)

Contributions of relevant organisational areas (including staff and student development and support)

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 5: Professional/staff development for the effective use of technologies for learning and teaching

Scoping statement: The key focus is on developing teaching staff to make effective use of technologies for learning and teaching. Professional and staff development activities encompass individual and group delivery, face-to-face as well as online. Self-directed learning activities/resources are also included. Some professional development will be designed and delivered to meet the strategic needs of the organisation whilst other activities will be provided to meet the demands of teaching staff as they arise.

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 6: Staff support for the use of technologies for learning and teaching

Scoping statement: This benchmark is restricted to the support of staff for the use of technologies in their teaching. It deals with staff who want to use technologies and/or encounter difficulties while using them, and who need to be able to get ready access to technical or educational assistance. Technical support is required to deal with problems or needs related to the technological environment, including hardware and software, communications and connections, and performance. Educational support addresses the needs of staff who want to maximise student learning outcomes.

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 7: Student training for the effective use of technologies for learning

Scoping statement: 'Technologies for learning' describes a range of information and communication technologies that are used to support learning and teaching. These can include the use of: computers and productivity software; learning management systems; library systems; the World Wide Web; mobile technologies. This includes technologies used on and off campus. Aspects of an ethical approach to the use of learning technologies are included. Student training refers to the applied use of such technologies in a learning context. It can take many forms and be provided by many people, for example through: specific training classes; self-study; or as part of a unit of study. Staff providing the training need appropriate skills which require alignment to the professional/staff development benchmark.

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 8: Student support for the use of technologies for learning

Scoping statement: Support for students in the use of technologies for learning is defined as primarily technical, but the learning context should be considered. Support should be considered in terms of the use of on-campus student computer facilities and the use of technologies from a distance. The term can include the use of: computers and productivity software; learning management systems; library systems; the World Wide Web; and mobile technologies.

Questions

How have you gone about designing organisational structures to deliver OLE services to key user groups across the institution? What evidence do you have of effectiveness in meeting the needs of the various user groups?

What are the key staffing capabilities required to manage your OLE effectively? How are these established, developed, recognised and rewarded?

Evaluation and research

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 2: Planning for, and quality improvement of the integration of technologies for learning and teaching

Scoping statement: There is a need for institution-wide quality assurance processes to ensure the appropriate use of technologies in learning and teaching. This will include planning, implementation, evaluation and feedback loops.

Questions

What approaches and processes are in place at institutional and local levels/domains to evaluate/research the impact of your OLE on the quality of student learning and staff teaching?

What approaches and processes are used to draw upon research/scholarship in the field and the practices of other institutions in enhancing the quality of your OLE?

Technologies used

Relevant ACODE benchmarking domain: Benchmark 3: Information technology infrastructure to support learning and teaching

Scoping statement: Information technology (IT) infrastructure describes a range of information and communication technologies that are used to support learning and teaching. This can include the use of: productivity software; learning management systems; library systems; the World Wide Web; mobile technologies. It also includes hardware (computers, telecommunications and ancillary equipment) and networks, both internal (LANS and WANS) and external (eg AARNet) which are used for the purposes of learning and teaching. These technologies support learning on and off campus.

Questions

How does your institution go about supporting educational innovation in the development of your OLE? What is the evidence of successful innovation?

How does your institution go about supporting technical innovation in the development of your OLE? What is the evidence of successful innovation?

How does the institution go about choosing, trialling and mainstreaming ICTs underpinning your OLE?

Special issues

Questions

What are the specific challenges involved in managing the quality of OLEs in offshore campus operations?

What are the specific challenges involved in managing the quality of OLEs in dual sector institutions?

Who are the key leadership personnel, and what are the key leadership and leadership processes?

Questions

How would you describe the way leaders in your organisation go about working together to best manage the quality of your OLE? What would you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your current leadership work? How could it be enhanced?

Appendix B: OLE Institutional Profile Matrix template

Profile attribute	Detail
Background	
Number of students	Number of students broken down into on/off campus or multimodal, local/international, full-time/part-time, undergraduate/postgraduate, local/international
Number and location of campuses	Number and location of local/international campuses and any partner teaching organisations
Strategic and operational plans	
Relevant plans and purposes	List all relevant plans, their purpose, their terms of reference Consider strategic plans, teaching and learning plans, information and communication technology plans, academic plans, learning and teaching strategies, operational plans
Approach to teaching and learning in general	Detail the agenda/vision for teaching and learning in general
Approach to the use of online teaching and learning	Detail the agenda/vision for online teaching and learning specifically
Models for online, distance, blended and flexible education	
Key student markets and modes of enrolment	Detail student markets; state of enrolments in the various modes (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate, on/off campus, local/international)
Models used to incorporate online learning environments (OLEs) into program offerings	Detail how online environments are being used within course curriculum
Policies and codes of conduct	
Relevant institutional policies	List all policies relevant to online teaching and learning
Codes on online conduct	List all policies relevant to the use of online environments
Review of policies and codes	Explain how these policies are reviewed and kept up to date
Technologies used	
Key corporately supported technologies	List all of the corporately supported technologies used in teaching and learning
Other technologies used	List other technologies used that are not corporately supported
How are they integrated	Explain how these technologies are integrated
Provision of technical help and support	Detail who provides technical help and support
Stage of deciding upon or implementing your learning management system (LMS)	Explain at which stage you are at in regards to a learning management system (LMS)

Profile attribute	Detail
Professional development and training	
Professional development and training provided	In regard to your OLE, list the training that is offered
How are these opportunities provided	Explain in what modes the training is provided
Who provides opportunities	In regard to your OLE, list who provides this training
Educational help and support mechanisms	In regard to your OLE, list who provides help and support
Evaluation of professional development, training and support services	Explain how the professional development, training and support facilities are evaluated
Design, development and production of digital resources	
Types of educational / instructional / learning design services provided	List the educational / instructional / learning design services provided
Type of media development and production services provided	List the types of media used to provide the educational / instructional / learning design services
Evaluation of design, development and production services	Explain how the educational / instructional / learning design services are evaluated
Evaluation and research	
Data collection on the effectiveness of your OLE	Explain what data is collected on the effectiveness of your OLE
How is data used to improve the OLE	Explain what is done with the data collected
Special research undertaken into your OLE	Explain any other research that is undertaken into your OLE
Contributions of relevant organisational areas	
Teaching and learning centre	Explain what role the teaching and learning centre has
Other divisions	List other divisions that may impact your OLE
Faculty-based groups	Explain the role of faculty-based groups have
Organisational support arrangements	Explain how organisational support is organised; e.g. central, decentralised
Key leadership personnel	
Key categories or types of leadership involved in the OLE	List the key leadership roles involved in the OLE
Number of staff involved in leadership roles	Detail how many staff are involved in OLE leadership roles
Mechanisms in place to align leadership contributions	List the mechanisms/boards involved in the leadership of the OLE
OLE governance	
Institutional committees and groups which deal with OLE matters	List the institutional-level committees and groups which deal with OLE matters
Faculty committees and groups which deal with OLE matters	List the faculty-level committees and groups which deal with OLE matters
Committees' and groups' purposes or terms of reference	List the purpose and terms of reference of each of the committees and groups
How do they relate to each other	Explain how these various committees and groups relate to each other

Profile attribute	Detail
Benchmarking	
Any activity undertaken	Detail any activities done in regards to benchmarking
Offshore and dual sector operations	
Offshore and dual sector operations	Detail any offshore and dual sector operations
Strengths and weaknesses	
Strengths of the management of your OLE	List the strengths of the current management of your OLE
Weaknesses of the management of your OLE	List the weaknesses of the current management of your OLE
Relevant reports	
Relevant reports that have been produced	List all reports relevant to your OLE
Relevant websites	
Relevant websites that have been developed	List any websites developed that are relevant to your OLE
Conclusion	
Conclusion	What conclusions can you draw about the general facilities and management of your OLE

Appendix C: Summary profile of key dimensions of managing OLEs at partner institutions at project commencement

Background

The number of enrolments across partner institutions ranged between 24,700 and 71,700 students studying in on-campus and off-campus modes.

All project partner institutions had a number of campuses in their home state ranging from two to six, with one partner institution having a partner campus in another state and one partner institution having three international campuses. Two partner institutions had a number of international teaching partners in South East Asia.

Strategic and operational plans

All partner institutions had a strategic plan running for a term of either five or ten years.

Two partner institutions had teaching and learning plans separate from their information and communication technology plans, whilst others incorporated this information within their strategic plans. It is noteworthy that one institution was likely to incorporate the learning and teaching strategy into their academic plan in the future. In addition, some partner institutions had operational and/or implementation plans.

A major outcome that arose was that the use of technologies for learning and teaching was not regarded as a distinct and separate e-Learning occurrence, but rather a fully integrated experience where technologies were seamlessly integrated into curriculum and the environment in which they were situated.

An issue to consider, therefore, was whether the approach to the use of online teaching and learning be incorporated within any overall teaching and learning plan, information and communication technology plan, or academic plan, or whether it should be considered as a separate and distinct planning activity leading to some type of e-Learning plan.

Approach to the use of online teaching and learning

There was a wide range of approaches to online teaching and learning across the partner institutions. One partner declared that online teaching and learning had not been clearly articulated and that discussions had only begun with senior management. One partner identified the need to have integration of traditional classroom teaching, distance education and online education and identified the needs of students in regards to flexible education as having choice in:

- the *time* (including flexible entry and exit points) at which study occurs
- the *pace* at which the learning proceeds
- the *place* (both physical and virtual) in which study is conducted
- the *content* that is studied
- the *learning style* adopted by the learner
- the forms of *assessment* employed
- the option to *collaborate* with others or to learn independently
- how teaching is *staffed*
- the *mix* of the above used in any given course or unit.

One partner had an advanced approach whereby policy was written that dictated that every course taught at the university would have an online component and their learning and teaching plan had been broken down into ten focus areas:

1. Course and program mapping
2. Assessment
3. Vertically integrated curriculum
4. Learning and teaching evaluation
5. Technology enhanced learning
6. Academic professional development
7. Learning and teaching scholarship
8. Teaching excellence
9. Learning support
10. Learning and teaching management and HR.

Policies and codes of conduct

It was common across the partner institutions to have a learning and teaching policy, or an online technologies in courses and units policy, which set out the management and use of learning technologies and outlined principles for good online design operation, systematic integration of technologies, and mandated that all units have a basic online presence.

Each partner institution reported the existence of a type of 'Code of good online practice' that detailed the acceptable use of information technology facilities.

Policies and codes of conduct were reviewed on a regular basis.

Technologies used

Each partner institution used an LMS as the core of their online technologies. Two partners used Blackboard, one of which would be moving to Moodle, two used Moodle and one used Desire2Learn.

A number of other technologies formed the suite of the partner institutions' online technologies:

- eLive
- iLecture, Lectopia, Echo360
- Camtasia, Adobe presenter
- Turnitin
- Mahara
- Respondus
- StudyMate
- Drupal, blogs and wikis
- ePortfolio
- Equella
- Evasys, Crystal Reports
- Wimba collaboration suite, Adobe Connect
- LAMS

- Gmail
- Library e-resources
- Learning repository
- Videoconferencing (Tandberg)
- iLabs and Sahara
- Interactive whiteboards.

A number of custom built, in-house systems were being used for quizzing/testing and summative assessment, media annotation, course materials (print and online) and electronic assignment submission.

Other social media and immersive technologies used across the partners included Facebook, YouTube, iTunesU, Second Life and Twitter.

Typically, the partners reported that the LMS, eLive, lecture capture system, plagiarism system and learning repository were integrated with the corporate student administration system. One partner reported that Wimba and Turnitin were externally hosted but integrated with their LMS.

Commonly, technical support was provided to staff and students via a central IT help desk. Support for the LMS was the role of the teaching and learning centre. It was mentioned that in some instances support roles for teaching and learning technologies were embedded within the faculties.

Learning management system

At the time of developing these project commencement profiles, each partner institution was at a stage of reviewing their LMS, making a decision on a new LMS or implementing a new LMS.

Two partners moved from Blackboard WebCT. One was in the pilot implementation stage of moving to Desire2Learn with an implementation rollout across 2011, with full realisation of benefits in 2012–2013, whilst the other partner was in the pilot implementation stage of moving to Moodle, being hosted through Netspot, with a pilot in 2011, then systematic rollout throughout 2012.

One partner, which had moved from Blackboard v7.2 to v9.1 in 2011, also moved to a Blackboard hosting service in Sydney.

Another partner was in the final year of a three-year project to implement a new LMS – LearnOnline.

The final partner, which had already been using Moodle for three years, was in the stage of upgrading to Moodle 2 in late 2011.

Professional development and training

In relation to implementation of a new LMS, initial training was conducted for staff to introduce the new system and provide an overview of the interface and core functions. Academic development staff and online advisors worked with academic staff on the conversion and development of units. Further training was conducted on an 'as needed / as requested' basis in the form of one-on-one sessions, drop-in sessions and small-group, tailored workshops. An emphasis on design and the choice of appropriate tools based on pedagogy was included. Online modules using an authentic environment were developed for both staff and students, to be used as stand-alone, self-paced modules.

In relation to the upgrade of a LMS, information sessions and 'How to' sessions were held outlining functional changes, enhancements and so on. Drop-in centres were made available and online resources were provided for training in the use of the suite of technologies.

It was common across all partner institutions to have academic developers and online advisers in the faculties/colleges and to have a central facility within their learning and teaching centres. Support was provided in the following areas: improving learning and teaching; program and course development and improvement; work-integrated learning; student learning support and e-Learning support.

Face-to-face and workshop sessions were evaluated at the conclusion of the sessions. A number of partner institutions sought feedback via formal methods such as surveys and user groups.

Design, development and production of digital resources

Three partner institutions have a central unit that provides media development and production services such as:

- study guides and readings (print and online)
- laboratory/practice manuals
- interactive learning activities and immersive environments
- case studies / interviews / media
- TV/radio broadcast replay
- lecture recording
- copyright compliance
- multimedia
- graphic design
- web development
- audio or video
- photography.

Other partner institutions had limited resources but most services were accessed on a fee-for-service basis.

Online surveys were commonly used to evaluate the level of satisfaction in regards to the provision of these services.

Evaluation and research

Data collection on the effectiveness of the OLE had been conducted by way of:

- institutional staff and student surveys
- student course experience surveys
- focus groups
- bi-annual review of an educational technology roadmap
- usage statistics on the use of the LMS and IT help desk.

Commonly, the data collected is fed back through major committee structures such as learning and teaching committees, the Academic Board and ICT strategy committees. Faculties were requested to report on planned improvements to the Academic Board.

Contributions of relevant organisational areas

Each partner institution has the equivalent of a teaching and learning / educational technology centre or unit which engages and works collaboratively with the faculties and other relevant areas to enhance teaching, learning and the student experience by:

- *monitoring and advancing scholarship* in the development of learning and teaching and higher degree research supervision
- *developing and maintaining guidelines, standards and resources* to assist staff and organisational units to plan, design, implement, evaluate and revise (i) programs/courses/units, (ii) learning and teaching resources, and (iii) technology enabled learning environments
- *designing, developing, implementing and evaluating professional learning programs* for staff to build the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to
 - teach, lead and manage for effective learning
 - engage in the critical reflective practice necessary to support continual development of themselves; their learning, teaching, and supervision programs and resources
- *undertaking and supporting institutional research and evaluation* (particularly in the form of the analysis and reporting of student feedback data) to inform strategy development, quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching
- *maintaining and developing an educational design and media production service* to support the design, development and evaluation of learning and teaching media and resources
- *developing and maintaining enterprise-level learning systems and technologies* that can be used by staff and students across the university to facilitate and enable learning
- *developing and maintaining capacity and protocols to identify, evaluate, and test-bed emerging technologies* for integration into learning and teaching
- *maintaining and developing (i) training and development programs, (ii) 'just in time' help facilities, and (iii) web-based resources* to support staff to effectively use the university's chosen learning systems and technologies
- *providing evidence-based advice to the university* on the development of its virtual and physical learning and teaching environments.

Each of the partner institutions has the equivalent of an information technology services division / office of informatics to provide core ICT services and support.

Similarly, each partner institution has the equivalent of an academic development / faculty support group at each faculty/college which provides support in the following areas:

- improving learning and teaching outcomes
- strengthening the university's global profile and influence
- program and course development and improvement
- work-integrated learning
- student learning support
- e-Learning support.

Key leadership personnel

The university partners declared that they had between 10 and 50 staff who were directly involved in leadership roles in regards to the OLE covering:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) – Provost
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) / (Learning Futures)
- Directors of key divisions and their senior staff
- Deans / Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) in each faculty/college
- Heads of School / Associate Heads of School (Teaching and Learning) in each school
- Faculty academic teaching leaders
- Faculty academic developers
- Project team for LMS.

The leadership contributions of these staff are aligned via various institutional committees:

- Academic Board
- Teaching and Learning Committee
- Information and Communication Strategy Committee
- Educational Technology Advisory Group / Management Advisory Committee for Academic Learning Technologies
- Learning Spaces Advisory Group
- Student Experience Committee.

They are also aligned via various faculty-level committees:

- academic development committees
- division teaching and learning committees
- LMS users groups
- faculty advisory groups (on LMS).

The lower-level committees and groups typically have wide-ranging membership, but have common membership into the higher-level committees, which often have a common chair, the DVC(A) and common membership in the Director Teaching and Learning and the Director of IT.

It was noted that at the time of this profile exercise, there was significant change of VCs and/or senior executive staff, which had a significant impact on the membership and stability of these committees.

Strengths of the management of the OLE

The university partners recognised the following strengths in terms of the management of the OLE:

- large accumulated institutional know-how
- supportive senior management group

- strong approaches to risk management
- solid reputation and good record for reliability and service
- cross-institutional membership of key committees ensuring transparency of accountability
- strong IT infrastructure and technical services
- well funded
- good faculty/college/school leadership in support of LMS
- good online central support and personal development/training courses.

Weaknesses of the management of the OLE

The university partners recognised the following weaknesses in terms of the management of the OLE:

- lack of overall IT strategy for the university
- policy lagging behind developments
- slow to respond to integration of new technologies
- no policy for social media/networking
- ongoing support staff are stretched
- no specific, current institution-wide evaluation of OLE
- minimum standards are not necessarily adhered to
- limited instructional / educational / learning design capability
- limited and inflexible funding to scale-up ICT innovation and development.

Conclusion

Although each partner institution felt that that they had made significant progress over a number of years, which had resulted in a much more robust, controlled and administered approach and had developed capacity in their OLE, all felt there was still more to be done to further improve the provision of online learning and that they may need to prepare for a somewhat different approach to the way in which they do business in their online environment.

Some partners had also recognised that there has been underinvestment in support for the LMS and that other developments related directly or indirectly to technical and behavioural impacts on the OLE space and developments.

Appendix D: Learning technologies used across the sector

As at 13 April 2011

Australian universities	Area responsible for overall management	Learning technologies used	Information source
Australian Catholic University	Learning and Teaching Centre Within the office of the DVC (Students, Learning and Teaching)	LMS – Blackboard – being replaced by Desire2Learn Specific tools: Mail, Chat, Threaded Discussion, Group Manager, Journal Discussion, Blog Discussion; web 2.0 technologies: Online journal, wikis, blogs, Facebook, MySpace, del.icio.us; other technologies either used or staff wanted to learn about them: podcasting, Skype, Moodle, Lectopia, Camtasia, Elluminate, Sakai, iTunes, Second Life	< www.acu.edu.au/student_resources/elearning/staff/links/ > Report on the findings of: <i>An exploration of the staff experience associated with online teaching and learning at ACU</i> Dr Annette Schneider rsm Ms BJ Johnson Dr Donna Gronn Dr Alanah Kazlauskas 16/2/2010
Australian National University	Division of Information Academic Support & Client Services – Learning Management Systems Resource Management & Planning – Teaching and Learning Environments	Moodle 1.9.6, Sakai	< http://information.anu.edu.au/about_is/doi/doi_functional_groups.php >
Bond University	Office of Quality, Teaching and Learning (QTL)	iLearn@Bond(Blackboard LMS) Integrated tools: Turnitin, Teams LX (wikis), Journal LX (blogs), Podcast LX, Advanced Groups, Event Signup, Student Evaluation of Teaching – evaluation KIT, Curriculum Review / Assurance of Learning UTS – SOS, Mobile Learning – iPad Trials, Clickers & Turning Point software, Camtasia, iTunesU	< www.bond.edu.au/about-bond/quality-teaching-and-learning/office-of-quality-teaching-and-learning/ilearn@bond/index.htm#toc1 >

Central Queensland University	Office of Learning and Teaching Within the Office of the DVC (Academic and Research)	Moodle 1.9 Elluminate, Webex, Turnitin, Camtasia, Captivate, Mahara	< http://cqunitech.cqu.edu.au/FCWViewer/view.do?site=838 > ACODE
Charles Darwin University	Office of Learning and Teaching Quality Within the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Community Engagement	LearnLine (Blackboard Learn 9) Wimba Classroom (virtual classroom), Wimba Voice Tools (web-based voice tools that facilitate and promote vocal instruction, collaboration, coaching and assessment), Safe Assign, blogs, streaming video and audio, REACT, Respondus, Camtasia, Snagit, Captivate	< http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/t4/elearning/implementing.html#range > ACODE
Charles Sturt University	Division of Teaching and Learning Services (LTS) Within the Office of DVC (Academic)	CSU Interact (Sakai framework) Adobe Captivate (eSims), Equella (Digital Object Management System), EASTS (Electronic Assignment Submission Tracking System), Forums, PebblePad, Interactivity, Interactive Video Teaching, Wimba Classroom (online meeting), PoDs (Places of Design), Turnitin, Second Life	< www.csu.edu.au/division/landt/resources/resources.htm > ACODE
Curtin University	Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning Within the Office of the DVC (Education)	LMS – Blackboard Campus Pack integrates with Blackboard and includes blogs, wikis, personal journals and podcasts, Turnitin, Echo360, Camtasia, Elluminate, iLecture, iPortfolio (in-house), Lectopia	< http://cel.curtin.edu.au/ > ACODE
Deakin University	Institute of Teaching and Learning Within the Office of the DVC (Academic)	DSO (LMS – Blackboard WebCT to Desire2Learn) Turnitin, Elluminate Live, blogs, learning repository, iLecture, social software (Drupal-SMF, Gallery2, MediaWiki), Respondus, StudyMate	< www.deakin.edu.au/itl/ >

Edith Cowan University	Centre for Learning and Development Within the Office of the PVC (Teaching and Learning)	LMS – Blackboard 8.5 (moving to 9.1) Course Management System, Web 2.0 technologies – MindMeister (mind maps), Prezi (presentations), xtimeline, Xtranormal (movies), WordPress, MyLecture (lecture capturing), BrowseAloud, Turnitin	< www.ecu.edu.au/learning-and-development/ >
Flinders University	Centre for Educational ICT Within the Office of the PVC (ICTS)	Flinders Learning Online (Blackboard Vista 8.3), changing to Moodle in 2012 Adobe Connect, Captivate, Shado (CMS), blogs, Safe Assign (plagiarism software), lecture recordings, PebblePad, Confluence, Second Life, wikis	< www.flinders.edu.au/teaching/ict-in-education/technology-and-tools/ > ACODE
Griffith University	Information Services (Learning and Teaching) Within the Office of the PVC (Information Services)	Learning@Griffith, Blackboard 8 Learning Activity Management System (LAMS), Learning Object Repository, Lecture Capture, podcasting, Expo (wikis and blogs), Lightweight Chat (online chat), Wimba tools, Safe Assign, Grade Centre	< https://intranet.secure.griffith.edu.au/computing/blended-learning-support/using-learning-at-griffith >
James Cook University	Teaching and Learning Development Within the Office of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor	LearnJCU Safe Assign, Grade Centre, eLectures, blogs, wikis, chat and virtual classroom, Journal, Captivate	< www.jcu.edu.au/tld/ >
La Trobe University	Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre Within the Office of the PVC (Curriculum and Academic Planning)	Learning Management System – Blackboard WebCT CE6, from Sem. 1, 2011 moving to Moodle Insight (digital image collections), Lectopia (lecture recording), Respondus (creating and managing assessment), Turnitin, Elluminate Live, PebblePad, Podcast	< www.latrobe.edu.au/teaching/ > ACODE

<p>Macquarie University</p>	<p>Learning and Teaching Centre Within the Office of the Provost, DVC (Academic)</p>	<p>Blackboard (WebCT –CE6) – moving to Moodle iLecture – moving to Echo360 (initially for delivery only), Turnitin, Evasys, coupled with Crystal Reports – student evaluation system, Confluence , Wimba Voice Board, limited use of LAMS, Mind Touch Deki-Wiki, limited personal videoconferencing (presently Connect but have also used Live Classroom), enterprise videoconferencing, Gmail Trialling iTunes U, iLecture video-capture, Wimba Classroom and Adobe Connect, Second Life, Curriculum Mapping and Online Unit Guide tool</p>	<p><www.mq.edu.au/ltc/></p>
<p>Monash University</p>	<p>Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, Office of the PVC (Learning and Teaching) Within the Office of the DVC (Education)</p>	<p>Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)@Monash – a joint initiative of the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), ITS and the eEducation Centre Moodle, Google Apps (email, calendar, chat etc.), Mahara, MeTL (developed by the eEducation Centre) is a software that uses inking on Tablet PCs</p>	<p><http://sites.google.com/site/monashvle/home></p>
<p>Murdoch University</p>	<p>Educational Development Unit Within the office of the Acting DVC (Academic)</p>	<p>LMS (WebCT CE8) Lectopia (lecture recording), PebblePad, Turnitin, Wimba Classroom (virtual classroom), Respondus (importing online questions), WordPress</p>	<p><http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-Development/Educational-technologies/></p>

<p>Queensland University of Technology</p>	<p>Learning and Teaching Unit Within the Office of the DVC (Teaching Quality) Learning Environments and Technology Services (LETS), in the Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support (TILS), provides a range of IT and OLE support services to students and staff</p>	<p>Blackboard 9 (upgrading to 9.1 in July 2011) Discussion forums, chat, Elluminate Live, Virtual Classroom, group rooms, blogs, wikis, journals, OWL – Open Web Lecture, Portfolios, Safe Assign, MELT Labs (in-house), Second Life, Confluence</p>	<p><www.qut.edu.au/about/learnteach.jsp></p>
<p>RMIT University</p>	<p>Education Technology Advancement Group Within the Learning and Teaching Unit Within the Office of the DVC (Academic)</p>	<p>Blackboard 9.1 Turnitin, blogs and wikis, ePortfolios, Lectopia (lecture recording), Library e-resources, personal response systems, WebLearn (in-house quizzing/testing tool), Elluminate Live, Learning Content Management System (Equella), Access Grid, videoconferencing (Tandberg), Media Annotation Tool (in-house), iLabs and Sahara (remote labs applications), interactive whiteboards (Teamboard), AV standardisation in learning spaces</p>	<p><www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=1y3oijvcg0jf></p>
<p>Southern Cross University</p>	<p>ITS within the Office of the CIO</p>	<p>Blackboard WebCT Vista 8 (under decision) Wikis, blogs, Elluminate, podcasting</p>	<p><www.scu.edu.au/teachinglearning/index.php/8/> Unavailable due to recent changes</p>

Swinburne University of Technology	Swinburne Professional Learning Under Academic Director within the Office of the DVC (Academic) Learning Technologies looked after by the Information Systems Group within the Information Technology Division	Blackboard 8	< www.its.swinburne.edu.au/about/departments/information_systems/index.html >
University of Adelaide	Centre for Learning and Professional Development Jointly managed by CLPD and ITS	MyUni – Blackboard 9 Wimba Classroom, Wimba Voice Tools, Pronto, Turnitin, Safe Assign, Camtasia, Wimba Create and Snagit, Equella, Mahara, Moodle, Articulate (eSimulations), LAMS	< www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/online/ > ACODE
University of Ballarat	Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice	LMS (Blackboard 8) Turnitin, Elluminate Live, Mahara, iTunes U podcasting, blogs and wikis, online surveys, AccessGrid, Moodle	< www.ballarat.edu.au/about-ub/organisation/portfolios/learning-and-quality/ > ACODE
University of Canberra	Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) Within the Office of the DVC (Education)	LearnOnline (Moodle 1.9.6) Echo360, Mahara	< www.canberra.edu.au/tlc >

University of Melbourne	Office of the PVC (Teaching and Learning) Within the Provost's Office	LMS (Blackboard 8) Turnitin, QuizSpace, Praze, IdeaSpace, TalkSpace, Podcasts, Lectopia/Echo360, Respondus, Respondus StudyMate, blogs, wikis in Blackboard, Praze (peer review in-house), Ideaspaces (blogging tool in-house), Talkspace (forum tool in-house), Access Grid (videoconferencing), Adobe Connect, Skype, EVO, Sakai (collaboration), 3-D (digital architecture space), personal response systems, Keepad in-house audience polling tool	< http://lms.unimelb.edu.au/elo/desdev.html > < trs.unimelb.edu.au > ACODE
University of Newcastle	Centre for Teaching and Learning Within the Office of the DVC (Academic and Global Relations)	Blackboard Turnitin, Lectopia, Rubrics	< www.newcastle.edu.au/unit/centre-for-teaching-and-learning/ >
University of New England	Teaching and Learning Centre Within the office of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Blackboard WebCT CE6 (Sakai), moving to Moodle 109 e-Submission, Turnitin, blogs, Wimba MyUNE, Mahara, discussion forums, blogs, Facebook, Kaltura, Camtasia Relay	< www.une.edu.au/tlc/academicdevelopment/resources.php >
University of New South Wales	Learning and Teaching @UNSW Within the Office of the DVC (Academic)	Blackboard 9, Moodle 1.9 trial Lectopia, UNSWTV, My Media, Turnitin Similarity Detection Service, Wimba	< http://learningandteaching.unsw.edu.au/content/learning_systems/elearning_portal.cfm?ss=4 >

University of Queensland	Teaching and Educational Development Institute and Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology Within the Office of the DVC (Academic)	Blackboard 9 Turnitin, Wimba, Lectopia, Second Life, iTunesU	< www.tedi.uq.edu.au/index.html >
University of South Australia	Learning and Teaching Unit Within the Office of the DVC (Academic)	Moodle Mahara, Echo, Gmail, Turnitin	< www.unisa.edu.au/ltu/ >
University of Southern Queensland	Learning and Teaching Support Unit Within the Office of the PVC (Learning and Teaching)	LMS – USQStudyDesk (Moodle 1.9) Mahara, Wimba Collaboration Suit – virtual classrooms, voice boards and podcasting, ICE – corporate publishing system for course materials (print and online), EASE – home grown electronic assignment submission software, Computer Marked Assessment (CMA) – home grown system for summative assessment activities (quizzes, exams), lecture recording software and tools – Camtasia Relay V2 used for live lecture capture and Adobe Presenter used for pre-recording teaching sessions, online assessment tools – a number of third party and home grown modules, Turnitin, Sharepoint, Site Core – CMS (corporate website), Equella is used as a digital repository, Right Now – enquiry and assist software, USQ Facebook, YouTube and Twitter	< www.usq.edu.au/learnteach/ltsu >

University of Sydney	Sydney Elearning Within the Office of DVC (Education) & Registrar	Blackboard 9.1 Lectopia, WebCT CE8 only Sem. 1, 2011	< http://elearning.sydney.edu.au/ >
University of Tasmania	Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching Within the Office of the PVC (Students and Education)	<u>MyLO</u> – My Learning Online (BlackBoard Vista) Lectopia, Impatica (an add-in for PowerPoint that allows the creation of efficient narrated slide shows), WordPress, Confluence, Second Life, PebblePad, Elluminate, Respondus, Turnitin, Echo360, Equella Decision on LMS due by end of May 2011	< www.teaching-learning.utas.edu.au/ > ACODE
University of the Sunshine Coast	Office of Learning and Teaching Within the Office of the DVC	LMS (Blackboard)	< www.usc.edu.au/University/LearningTeaching/LearningTeaching.htm >
University of Technology Sydney	Institute for Interactive Media and Learning Within the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Teaching, Learning and Equity)	UTSOnline (Blackboard) Online discussions, journals, blogs, wikis, announcements, email, virtual chat, quiz and survey tools, files and web links, SparkPlus (in-house developed group peer assessment tool), ePortfolios (Campus Pack and Chalk & Wire), ReView, Turnitin, grade mark and self-and peer-mark	< www.ims.uts.edu.au/ >
University of Western Australia	Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning Within the Office of the PVC (Education)	LMS (WebCT 8) Lectopia (lecture capture)	< www.catl.uwa.edu.au/ > ACODE

University of Western Sydney	Teaching Development Unit Within the Office of the PVC (Learning and Teaching)	vUWS (Blackboard) EVO (web-based conferencing tool), Skype, Connected Classrooms, Elluminate, communication tools (announcements, email, discussion board, blogs, learning journals, wikis, group pages, personal and course calendars, personal and course task lists, Digital Drop Box, Student Roster, Virtual Classroom/Chat, Student Homepages, voice-based discussions, podcasting, quizzes, multimedia resources, lecture recordings, web links), Sharepoint, Confluence, Access Grid, Turnitin, Echo360, LAMS	< www.uws.edu.au/learning_teaching/learning_and_teaching/teaching_development_unit >
University of Wollongong	Academic Services Division Within the Office of the DVC (Academic)	eLearning@UOW (WebCT Vista 8), piloting Moodle 1.9.5 WordPress	< www.uow.edu.au/asd/index.html >
Victoria University	Within the Office of the PVC (Students and Learning and Teaching)	Blackboard (WebCT CE6) Turnitin, Elluminate Live, My ePortfolio, ReVU (lecture capture and podcasting), VU Communities, VU Wiki, Respondus (content creator), StudyMate, Equella (content creator and manager)	< http://tls.vu.edu.au/portal/index.aspx >
New Zealand universities	Area responsible for overall management	Learning technologies used	Information source
University of Waikato	Waikato Centre for eLearning	Moodle, Turnitin, Wimba, Panopto, iTunesU, Google apps	< http://online.waikato.ac.nz/wcel/services/moodle/ >
University of Auckland	Academic & Collaborative Technologies Group, ITS	Cecil (homegrown LMS) Coursebuilder, Lecture recoding (homegrown), Turnitin, BBFlash/Camtasia, various software tools used by staff for teaching and learning managed by ITS, Centre for Academic Development, faculty IT staff	< www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/about/teaching-learning/elearning >

Appendix E: Reference group

Name	Position	Phone	Email
Professor Brian Corbitt	Deputy PVC, Business Research RMIT University	(03) 9925 1412	brian.corbitt@rmit.edu.au
Professor Geoff Scott	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) University of Western Sydney	(02) 4570 1004	g.scott@uws.edu.au
Associate Professor Helen Carter	Manager, Educational Development Centre Teaching and Learning Centre Macquarie University	(02) 9850 9454	helen.carter@mq.edu.au
Associate Professor Philip Uys	Director, Strategic Learning and Teaching Innovation Charles Sturt University Orange Campus	(02) 6365 7501	puys@csu.edu.au

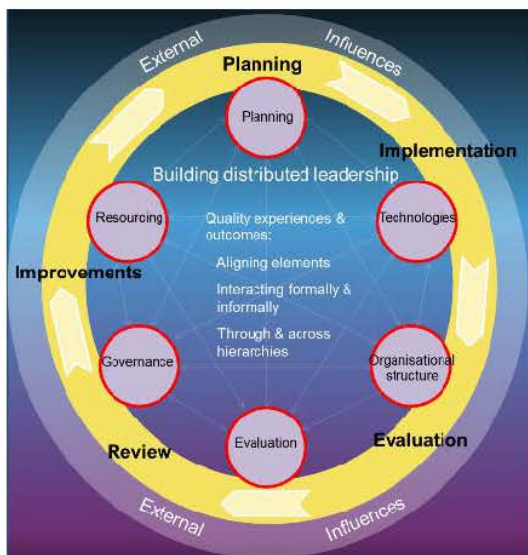
Appendix F: ACODE representative evaluation instrument

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Framework elements

3. The Framework in its current form consists of six interrelated elements (identified in the red circles in the following summary diagram).

You can access a short explanatory audio commentary about the Framework (mp3 file; ~6min:30sec; ~2MB) by clicking this [link](#). (Depending on your browser settings, you may need to right-click the link, save the file and play it separately)



You can access a brief background document on the Framework (pdf file; ~120KB) by clicking this [link](#). Hovering your mouse over the element name in the table below will show a description of that element.

For each of the six Framework elements listed below please rate:

- **how important** you feel that element is for effective management of the online learning environment at your University; and
- **how satisfied** you are with your University's performance on that element.

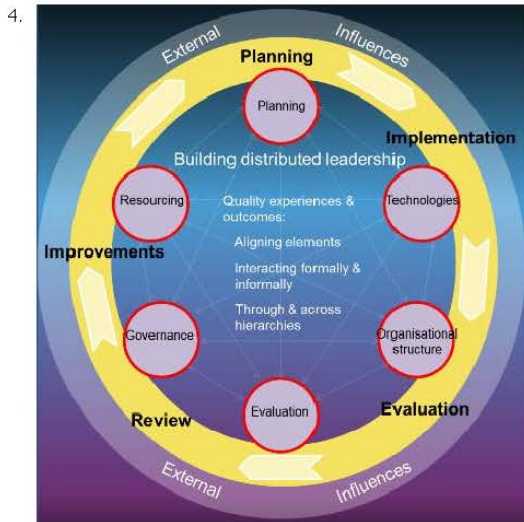
Framework elements	Importance				Satisfaction			
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not satisfied	Partially satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organisational structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Governance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resourcing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30%

[Back](#) [PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE](#)

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Additional elements



You can access a brief background document on the Framework by clicking this [link](#).

In addition to the six elements (identified in the red circles) please list any other elements that you consider important for the effective leadership of the online learning environment at your University.

40%

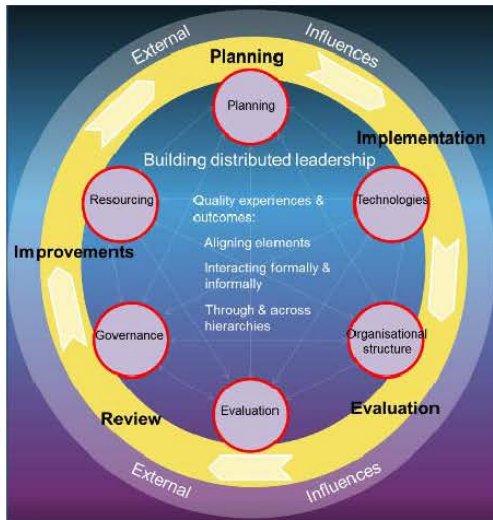
[Back](#)

[PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE](#)

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Interactions between Framework elements

5. The Framework includes the possibility of important interactions between the elements.



You can access a brief background document on the Framework by clicking this [link](#).

Possible pair-wise interactions between the six Framework elements are listed in the table below. Please rate **how important** you feel that interaction is for the effective management of the online learning environment at your University.

Hovering your mouse over the element name in the table below will show a description of that element.

Please note: N/A is the default selection for all interactions. Please use the drop-down box for other rating options.

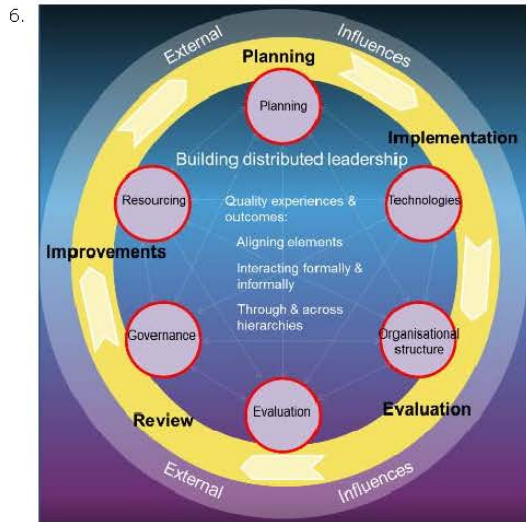
Framework elements	Organisational structure	Governance	Technologies	Resourcing	Evaluation
Planning	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Organisational structure	--	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Governance	--	--	N/A	N/A	N/A
Technologies	--	--	--	N/A	N/A
Resourcing	--	--	--	--	N/A

50%

[Back](#) [PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE](#)

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Additional Framework element interactions



You can access a brief background document on the Framework by clicking this [link](#).

Please list any other forms/combinations of interaction(s) between the elements of the Framework that you consider are important for the effective management of the online learning environment at your University.

60%

[Back](#)

[PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE](#)

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Distributed leadership for online learning environments

7. Distributed leadership approaches seem relevant to the complex task of managing online learning environments. We have defined distributed leadership as: **action** by **many people** working **collectively** across the institution to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching. Two measures of the performance of distributed leadership in an organisation are the alignments between

1. the vertical (formal line reporting relationships) and horizontal (peers in different work groups) actors/actions; and
2. the formal (organisationally appointed/sanctioned) and informal (emergent and relationship-based) actors/actions.

For the distributed leadership actors/actions identified below please rate:

- **how important** you feel the alignment between them is at your University; and
- **how effective** (generally) you feel the alignment between them is at your University.

Hovering your mouse over the distributed leadership actor/action in the table below will show a description of that actor/action.

Distributed leadership actors/actions	Importance				Effectiveness			
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not effective	Partially effective	Effective	Very effective
Alignment of vertical & horizontal leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alignment of formal & informal leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

70%

Back PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Additional factors indicating high performing distributed leadership

8. Please list any other factors that you consider are measures of distributed leadership for the management of online learning environments.

80%

Back

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Characteristics of distributed leadership

9. The Framework identifies a range of characteristics of distributed leadership. For each of the **12 characteristics of distributed leadership** listed below, in the context of quality management of the online learning environment at your University, please rate:

- **how important** that characteristic is for effective distributed leadership at your University; and
- **how clearly in evidence** that characteristic of distributed leadership is at your University.

Distributed leadership characteristic	Importance				In evidence			
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not in evidence	Partially in evidence	In evidence	Strongly in evidence
Enabled individual and collective agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Co-created & shared vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inclusive of all those who lead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Broadest recognition of leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicative and engaging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distributed leadership characteristic	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not in evidence	Partially in evidence	In evidence	Strongly in evidence
Meaningful rewards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trusting and respectful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaborative in development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nurturing of valued professional expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valuing professional forums and communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continuity and sustainability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

90%

Back

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE

Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

Building and sustaining distributed leadership

10. As with all forms of effective leadership, building and sustaining distributed leadership capacity are important for enhancing institutional performance. In the context of management of the online learning environment at your University, please describe strategies for building and sustaining effective institutional distributed leadership that you feel are important.

100%

[Back](#)

[IMPORTANT: PLEASE CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT YOUR SURVEY](#)

Appendix G: Independent audit report

**Report on the audit of the OLT project:
Building distributed leadership in designing
and implementing a quality management
framework for online learning
environments**

Prepared by Professor Lynne Hunt
Emeritus Professor, University of Southern Queensland
Adjunct Professor, University of Western Australia
October 2012

This project is about leadership in the quality management of online learning environment (OLE) systems and sites. Five universities, led by Deakin, developed a framework and guidelines for the implementation and management of OLEs based on the principles of distributed leadership advocated in a now well-established academic tradition.

This project is significant because Australian universities make large investments in educational technologies in support of their commitments to online, open, distance and flexible education. The project tackles the big issues of change leadership to promote learning and teaching rather than simply admiring long-standing problems. In particular, it addresses how to engage both central and devolved leaders in the quality management of OLEs and it raises questions about the relationship between positional and devolved leadership.

This audit drew on interviews with project team members and on documentary analysis. It shows that the key outcomes were:

- the Framework and guidelines, the originality of which lie in the application of a holistic, whole-of-university framework to OLEs, with special reference to linking infrastructure, teaching and student learning outcomes
- the development of a detailed and thorough evidence base about distributed leadership and OLEs in Australian universities
- a well-organised and easily navigable website that facilitated transparent administration and leadership
- capacity building for distributed leadership with associated aspects of institutional transformation in participating universities.

The strengths of the project are that it:

- was managed and led in a highly successful manner that was informed by principles of distributed leadership
- developed a strong evidence base
- synthesised much that is known about distributed leadership
- demonstrated the systemic nature of the variables associated with the successful implementation and management of OLEs.

Any possible weaknesses of this project also pertain to many learning and teaching leadership projects, foremost among which is that it is necessarily partial, limited as it is by time and budget. Further, any outcomes, such as frameworks and guidelines, face the contradictory requirements of academic rigour and dissemination. If documents are too detailed and specific, they are unlikely to be brief enough to be read by time-poor academics. Further, if they are general enough to have relevance to the Australian higher education sector then they may lack the specificity required, in this case, for the quality implementation and management of OLEs.

Overall, project members from all participating universities saw the greatest threat to the intentions and outcome of this project to be university senior leadership. They felt that projects, such as this one, lack leverage in the context of the churn and change that have become hallmarks of university life. There was also a view that the relationship between positional and distributed leadership needs to be addressed if the outcomes of this project are to have an impact. This is both a threat and an opportunity because it suggests that the importance of distributed leadership, as demonstrated through this project, needs to be more widely disseminated, particularly to senior university leaders, and it is the recommendation of this audit report that the Office for Learning and Teaching collaborate with the project team to ensure that this happens.

List of acronyms

ACODE	Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd
ASCILITE	Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education
ATEM	Association for Tertiary Education Management
CAUDIT	Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology
CoP	Community of practice
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
HEA	Higher Education Academy
ICT	Information and communication technology
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LMS	Learning management system
OLE(s)	Online learning environment(s)
OLT	Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
RMIT	RMIT University
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
UniSA	University of South Australia
USQ	University of Southern Queensland

Table of Contents

Project methodology	75
What did the project aim to do?	76
Was the project significant?	78
Was the project managed effectively?	79
What were the outcomes of the project?	82
Outcome 1: Framework	82
Outcome 2: Guidelines	83
Outcome 3: Website and documentation	85
Outcome 4: Capacity building for distributed leadership and institutional transformation	86
Where to from here?	90
References	91
Appendix 1: Self-completed questionnaire and results	92
Appendix 2: Telephone interview questions and results	96

Project methodology

This review of the project, 'Building distributed leadership in designing and implementing a quality management framework for online learning environments', is based on a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). Strengths and weaknesses will be addressed together, as part of a dynamic that cannot be fully disentangled. For example, it might be seen as a weakness that the project varied from processes originally proposed – or it may be a strength that the project team could spot an issue and be sufficiently flexible to change course.

The methodology is qualitative in nature and relevant verbatim comments from the self-completed questionnaires and the telephone interviews conducted for this review have been included in the report to explore diversity of opinion and to provide insight into the nuance of interpretation.

This report is structured in terms of six key questions that reflect the core evaluation questions suggested by the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT). These questions allow for analysis of both product (outcomes) and process. The questions are:

1. What did the project aim to do?
2. Was the project significant?
3. Was the project successfully managed?
4. What were the outcomes?
5. What were the strengths and weaknesses of each outcome?
6. Where to from here?

This review is based on:

- self-completed questionnaires
- telephone interviews
- a documentation review
- a website review.

The **self-completed questionnaire** contained 12 open-ended questions focused on the highlights, strengths and weaknesses of the project including project leadership and management. All members of the project team completed the questionnaire, including the project leaders and manager. The questions and full results are included in Appendix 1.

Telephone interviews were conducted with all project team members and with three colleagues of participating universities who were external to the project team, including two senior staff. It was considered important to secure the views of senior colleagues in order to ascertain levels of awareness about the project and to assess the actual and potential impact of the project on university processes. The questions and full results are included in Appendix 2.

The **documentation review** included inter alia:

- progress reports
- occasional papers
- minutes
- briefings.

The **website review** was closely intertwined with the review of documentation because it provided a comprehensive collection of all documents associated with the project. However, the focus of the website analysis was on transparency, organisation and accessibility.

What did the project aim to do?

This project was about leadership in the quality management of online learning environments (OLE) systems and sites. The specific research question was:

How does an Australian university best conceive and implement, through distributed leadership structures, a quality management framework for online learning environments?

The objective was to provide an overall framework and guidelines for the quality management of OLEs. Enabling objectives were to:

- consolidate associated literature with special reference to whole-of-institution change leadership associated with OLEs
- explore OLE quality assurance and improvement methods
- investigate the alignment between OLE quality assurance and management and institutional plans and processes
- model distributed leadership capacity building for OLEs.

The project was divided into four phases that included the following deliverables. The progress reports <www.deakin.edu.au/itl/research-eval/projects/altc-ole/deliverables.php> indicate that the deliverables of the four phases of the project have been met in a timely manner.

Phase 1

- A literature review including two occasional papers about (a) an OLE management framework; and (b) distributed leadership and OLE quality management
- Maps of roles and responsibilities for implementing OLEs
- Current status of OLEs across the sector
- Draft OLE Quality Management Framework
- Methodology
- Profiles of partner institutions' OLE governance
- Project website

Phase 2

- Formative evaluation reports on each partner institution trial of aspects of the Framework
- Development of refined OLE Quality Management Framework

Phase 3

- Formative evaluation reports on trials of the complete Framework
- Australian teaching and learning centre directors' survey on value of the Framework

Phase 4

- Develop OLE Quality Management Framework
- Develop 'A condensed guide to building distributed leadership for the quality management of online learning environments'

The **partner universities** in the project were:

- Deakin University
- Macquarie University
- RMIT University
- University of South Australia
- University of Southern Queensland.

The aim was to assay aspects of an OLE quality management framework in different settings. Accordingly, these universities were selected because they are diverse in nature. RMIT is a large dual sector university. The University of South Australia is currently implementing a new learning management system, which provided opportunities for insights into change leadership associated with OLEs. USQ is an established, non-metropolitan distance education provider and both USQ and Macquarie University have experience with the ACODE benchmarking processes associated with OLEs, thereby providing links to sector-wide processes.

Some members of the project team considered it a strength that the participating universities were diverse in nature.

They have added to the project by providing diverse perspectives to test the framework.

The framework is general enough to be applicable whether the institutional structure is more devolved or relatively centralised.

Whilst the project was designed to maximise sector-wide outcomes, one participant thought that 'diversity worked against a consistent approach to trialling the framework' and project reports revealed that:

There were important differences between how institutions choose to define vision and

strategy in this area. One institution, for example, has adopted a 10-year window where other institutions are presently reconceptualising such vision statements or framing them within a 2–5 year period. There are discernible tensions, also, between those who advocate that online learning strategy, policy and planning should be separate – an indication of its distinctive character and also importance – and those who argue that it should be ‘integrated’ ‘embedded’ within general teaching and learning as testimony to the fact that it is not different from normative tertiary learning.

Was the project significant?

This project is significant because Australian universities make large investments in educational technologies in support of their commitments to online, open, distance, and flexible education from which they might expect quality student learning outcomes.

This work is important because of the enormous growth in online delivery. We need work on standards and enhancing the quality of OLEs.

The project has provided a recognised structure that could be applied. This has the potential to be THE book that a manager would pick up, but it needs to be promoted in that way so that a new DVC would say: ‘This is what I’m going to implement’.

This project tackles big change leadership issues that address:

- the need for distributed leadership to ensure appropriate synergies between OLEs, teaching and learning
- tensions between devolved and central organisations in change leadership
- the need for senior leadership engagement to ensure that change is managed in such a way that it enhances student learning outcomes, because:

While the university solidly supports the development of our ICT capacity, there is less commitment to resourcing the development of learning and teaching capacity to use the OLE well.

The holistic and distributed leadership approach adopted in this project is significant because it forms part of a well-established academic tradition given impetus nearly two decades ago by Barr and Tagg (1995), who noted that pedagogy and organisation are inextricably intertwined and that new pedagogies must be supported by holistic, organisational change because piecemeal changes are distorted by dominant paradigms. Tagg’s *Learning Paradigm College* (2003) echoed these sentiments and others (Fullan & Scott 2009; Hunt 2006; Hunt & Peach 2009) have advocated holistic and integrated change. Alverno College is internationally renowned for implementing holistic approaches to management and student engagement and the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) also promotes holistic and integrated change through its Change Academy initiatives. The intent of this project has a strong academic lineage.

However, there is a tension in the project design – whilst the intent is holistic, the very structure of this, or any other project, is necessarily partial and particular. In brief, ‘separatist’ attention to OLEs sits a little uncomfortably in university-wide, holistic frameworks. Even so, project team members considered it important to sustain a

separate focus on OLEs lest they got lost in the mix. In their view there is a need for a clear OLE plan that addresses all the elements of the framework and:

... which determines the direction of online teaching and learning technologies; research on what's appearing on the horizon, how they are going to be trialled, implemented, used and retired, and that without this being addressed the direction gets muddled inside the overall University's Strategic Plan or the ICT plan.

Analysis of the extent to which OLE planning should be separatist and mainstreamed will make a worthy contribution to the literature in papers arising from this project. There was some ambivalence about the significance of OLT leadership projects in broad terms, even though the critique did recognise the importance of applying distributed leadership to OLEs:

I'm a bit ambivalent about all leadership projects. We've got so much written from every angle. This one does contribute around issues associated with OLEs. So it was helpful to me at institutional level because I'm trying to get whole-of-university understanding around the directions my university should take with OLEs. But, more generally, every university has a different culture, different structures and history. You have to be able to pick and choose from a generic framework.

This critique goes beyond the boundaries of this particular project but it is worth noting because the matter was raised by more than one respondent and because it suggests directions for OLT in promoting effective leadership in teaching at Australian universities:

The project now needs prominence somewhere – maybe in web format – something interactive. I'm not sure that it should be buried on the OLT website. Maybe something like JISC needs to happen which the Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education report cited as an organisation that provides 'collaborative advantage'. We really need to afford the sector the opportunity to use the tool.

Post-project, OLT needs to get involved. ALTC used to do this with colloquia. It would be helpful if OLT facilitated a colloquium for a couple of days of presentations and discussion. They would need to invite DVCs, PVCs and academic developers. Or they could do something like the HEA annual conference where those who had developed HEA-funded projects speak. We haven't got anything like that.

Was the project managed effectively?

Questionnaires and interviews revealed strong support for the work of the project leaders and its manager with particular reference to consultative communication strategies, clarity about goals and responsibilities and collaboration.

Project reports show that the diversity of the five partner universities 'in both skill sets, experiences and geographical locations ... provided a major challenge' in the leadership and management of the project. This was addressed by careful adherence to the principles of distributed leadership: 'One could say they have eaten their own dog food (it's been distributed)'. The project was held together by strong administrative support and regular communication including formal fortnightly team meetings via conference

call, three project conferences, email, Moodle, the project website, and focus groups at each partner institution. The communication and engagement strategies were acknowledged by team members as being particularly effective:

Through the Team Meeting Minutes, Tasks Lists (which identifies team member responsibilities and deliverables), the monthly Project Status Reports (which tracks status of individual tasks and actuals against budget) and emails to individuals indicating/reminding team members of their task responsibilities and timelines, the project at present is in good shape from both a timeline and budget perspective.

The OLT project itself went well. Regular teleconferences made it comfy to maintain a dialogue. We were, of course, hindered by the time constraints of our work at institutional level, but there were two of us involved which meant that one of us would normally be available.

The way Dale managed that has been good. Management of the project has been exceptional. This really made a difference in terms of everything happening on task, yet I never felt harassed or pushed.

Dale had the right kind of push and pull. It's amazing that he could maintain the momentum of the project in the face of changes at his own university. That really needs to be acknowledged. Change could have got in the way, but they didn't allow it to affect the project.

The focus groups attracted some criticism because of the difficulty of organising 15 or so busy people into one room at one time and because of the difficulties of pitching the discussion at a level to suit all participants. One respondent felt that his participation was to no avail:

The focus groups were underwhelming. We lost goodwill. These were senior, busy people. The discussion started too low. A small amount of pre-reading about the local context would have raised the level of discussion so that participants in the focus group could have discussed not just what they have done but how they would like to improve and extend on systems. The way it was done didn't offer anything to those who had already lived through the processes. There is little value in gathering information about low-level activity. We need to build on good practice and pose the next level of questions.

I thought the project wasn't forward looking. It was grounded in a project methodology that has been around for a while. What's this offering? What's different about this? What's in it for my institution? I helped to workshop the framework with these questions but I haven't seen much change in the documentation.

The team leadership and management were responsive to emergent difficulties in managing the focus groups. The original intention had been to allocate a budget to each partner university for them to work on matters of local import. However, the team quickly decided that it would be better to have the focus groups centrally organised and to conduct each one on a different theme. Given the difficulties in engaging senior leaders in focus group discussion, the final round was changed to individual interviews and it was felt that this did reach senior university staff and that it produced rich data.

The focus groups were planned to be run about different themes but the feedback from participating universities was that key senior people couldn't get together at the

appointed times so in the final phase we switched to targeted individual interviews and this way we got richer data from quite senior people.

The project **reference group** comprised:

- Professor Brian Corbitt (RMIT)
- Professor Geoff Scott (University of Western Sydney)
- Associate Professor Helen Carter (Macquarie University)
- Associate Professor Philip Uys (Charles Sturt University).

The engagement of project reference groups can be a tricky aspect of OLT projects. In this case it has been successful, particularly in its alignment of skills on the reference group that included holistic change leadership and OLEs. They were effectively engaged in the project, receiving monthly progress reports on which they sometimes made comment. Email correspondence with the project manager indicated that:

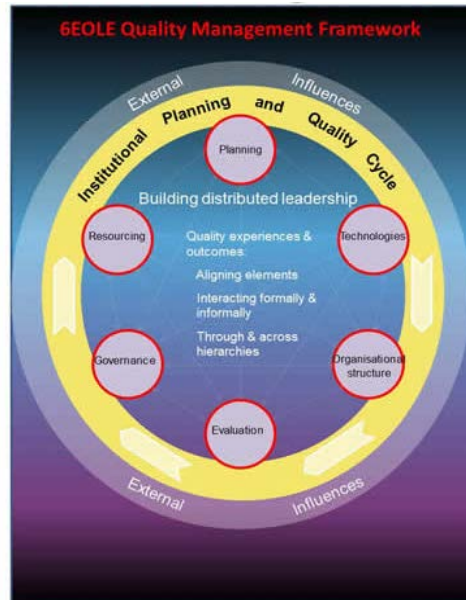
At times ... we sent them documents to review and provide feedback e.g. the first draft of the Quality Management Framework. The most formal involvement was a 1.5-hour conference call with all of them together at each of our (3) project conferences (these were our face-to-face meetings where all project team members came to RMIT for a two day team meeting) ... where they gave us feedback on various documents and often provided good references to relevant materials ...

When Assoc. Prof. Helen Carter became president of ACODE, we used that connection to request that we run a survey with their ACODE reps to get their feedback on the Quality Management Framework. This was run in March and then the results were presented and further discussion was convened at a workshop at the ACODE meeting in June. The Survey and Final Report can be viewed at <www.deakin.edu.au/itl/research-eval/projects/altc-ole/evaluation.php> in the Director Survey section.

What were the outcomes of the project?

Outcome 1: The Framework

The key objective of the project was to provide an overall Framework and guidelines for the quality management of OLEs. The Framework is shown in the diagram following.



The elements of the Framework are not, in themselves, original. Similar frameworks may be seen in many business or planning models, or in action learning cycles. However, the project has import because it is a thorough collation of information about distributed leadership and about OLEs in Australian universities. Further, it stresses the interrelationship of elements of the Framework:

Much of the content is not original, rather it's a synthesis – it brings together these things for the first time in one spot.

The greatest benefit is in highlighting the variables one should take into account. The project stressed the systemic nature of the variables associated with the successful implementation of OLEs. It's impossible to look at one without the other.

In brief, the originality of the Framework lies not in its elements but in the application of a holistic, whole-of-university framework to OLEs, with special reference to linking infrastructure, teaching and student learning outcomes. As one participant observed:

Fundamentally, there needs to be a shared understanding of what is required by all stakeholders so that everyone's efforts are contributing to a shared strategic direction for the OLE. It is not enough to set up strategic planning and documentation outside the users and then communicate it to them, important though that is. Distributed leadership is a model that supports having them involved throughout, and this is more likely to mean the 'why' is dealt with, including how this will enhance students' learning. Central bodies need, for example, to understand more fully how their technological decisions will impact on learning and teaching; faculty staff need to appreciate, for

instance, why it is unrealistic and impractical for large scale training and trialling to be done prior to a decision of a provider of an LMS being made and that it is impossible – and undesirable if one accepts that students look for consistency most of all with their online learning – for every individual desire to be accommodated.

One respondent questioned if originality is an appropriate criterion by which to judge this or any other university learning and teaching project:

I always like to think in terms of the half-life of academic development knowledge – which is about ten years. The lessons ... need to be repeated and reinforced.

It may be concluded that the project team has summarised, collated and reinforced information about change leadership and made an original contribution in applying it to the implementation and maintenance of OLEs.

Outcome 2: Guidelines

This report reviewed the draft evidence-based approach to implementing the 6EOLE Quality Management Framework, as well as the condensed guide to building distributed leadership for the quality management of OLEs. These documents bring together the Framework and the principles of distributed leadership with material from the literature review, surveys of Australian directors of learning and teaching centres and ACODE, as well as focus groups. The guidelines therefore provide an excellent evidence base that offers considerable opportunity for further publication. At present, the evidence-based approach document seems to be more of a report on the project or an evidence base for a guide than a guide in its own right. Further, the condensed guide includes slices of the evidence base. Some greater clarification of, and demarcation between, the purposes of the two documents will assist in the dissemination of outcomes. In other words, the same standards of instructional and learning design that might be expected when preparing courses for students will help when designing the guidelines.

I would make some aspects less confusing. The graphic flow is not straightforward. What do the arrows mean? I would also simplify the outcomes. The guidelines need to be developed with the same eye to learning outcomes that we would have if we were preparing courses for our students.

The condensed guide is structured in four parts with three appendices that collate the evidence base gathered for this project:

- Part A: Framing the quality management of OLEs in Australian higher education
- Part B: Institutional profiling of your OLE
- Part C: Actioning the elements of the Quality Management Framework
- Part D: Developing distributed leadership to enhance the quality management of OLEs
- Appendix A: OLE Institutional Profile Matrix template
- Appendix B: Learning technologies used across the sector
- Appendix C: Relationships between elements to ensure effective collaboration/communication

The aim in developing the guidelines was not to impose one-size-fits-all strategies.

Rather, it was to develop guidelines for action that might be adapted to local university contexts. The project proposal indicated that the aim was to:

guide but not prescribe specific leadership actions in various organisational settings relating to new investments in OLEs, and the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of such environments for the benefit of student learning. It will be a transparent, workable and adaptable set of guidelines, which can also aid internal and external benchmarking of OLEs in the sector.

In the final analysis, this may be an undoable task because guidelines written at a high level of generality risk being scorned as naïve statements of the obvious and those written with greater specificity will be condemned as inapplicable to local contexts. Damned if they do and damned if they don't. However, project team members did indicate that they found the guidelines useful because they served as checklists that revealed gaps in practice:

At an institutional level the evaluation aspect was most important to us. We had a major project going and working with this team validated what we were doing but also reminded us of things we didn't plan so well. What stakeholder evaluation do we need? What data do we require? What data will tell us we've succeeded? We really should have done this earlier in the piece.

For some key players, significant elements are missing. For one university this was expressed as a lack of vision or, as another university put it, there was no 'big picture' to guide OLEs. For another, it was a lack of an effective communication strategy and for several it was the lack of a coherent plan or roadmap.

The condensed guidelines were seen as the most important in terms of dissemination:

The condensed guidelines will be appealing. We'll get a lot more mileage out of the condensed version – it's the most practical.

Given the consensus about the usefulness of the guidelines, most debate hinged on how best to disseminate the outcomes of the project across the Australian higher education sector. Awareness of the project is already relatively high because of the multiple focus groups held at five universities, which attracted large number of participants. There was also:

- the ACODE institutional representatives survey
- a presentation of the ACODE survey findings at a full meeting of the ACODE membership
- the presentation of a workshop on the project at the 2011 ASCILITE conference
- the presentation of a conference paper on the project at the 2011 ASCILITE conference
- a poster presentation at the ALTC Leadership Project forum held in 2011.

A post-project dissemination strategy is now needed to facilitate the long-term impact of the outcomes of the project. Respondents variously suggested collaboration with OLT, ACODE and ASCILITE, to which might be added ATEM and CAUDIT, in the true spirit of whole-of-university approaches and distributed leadership. Most of all, respondents advocated the involvement of senior university staff.

If this project has an effect it will depend on pivotal senior people.

Post-project, OLT needs to get involved. ALTC used to do this with colloquia. It would be helpful if OLT facilitated a colloquium for a couple of days of presentations and discussion. They would need to invite DVCs, PVCs and academic developers. Or they could do something like the HEA annual conference where those who had developed HEA-funded projects speak. We haven't got anything like that.

There is a big problem with these projects. We get evidence and disseminate it but we are so busy on the project we can really only think about dissemination when we are finished. By then we are out of budget. I'd like to see something like the Learning Space Forum that ALTC organised. Those things help projects to disseminate their work.

To this end, 'collaborative advantage' might be achieved if OLT and the LH Martin Institute worked together to disseminate the outcomes of this and other leadership projects to senior staff of the Australian higher education sector.

In conclusion, the guidelines are detailed and useful. The function of the extended and condensed guidelines may need to be demarcated and the condensed guidelines simplified further to facilitate dissemination. Post-project action is now required better to engage senior staff and to disseminate the outcomes of this important project.

Outcome 3: Website and documentation

Fullan and Scott (2009) observed that systematic institutional evidence gathering is essential to successful change leadership. Accordingly, this project set out to collate 'key sources of evidence that need to be collected to ensure that institutional investments generate good student learning experiences'. The extent to which the project team succeeded in this endeavour may be seen in the documents included on the project website. These are detailed and thorough, and deserve to be disseminated more widely than they have been so far. The documents on the website include:

1. The project proposal
2. Occasional paper: Towards the development of an online learning environment quality management framework
3. Holt, D. (2011). Occasional paper: Distributed leadership in support of quality management of online learning environments
4. Focus group discussions – Phase 1: Building distributed leadership in designing and implementing a quality management framework for online learning environments
5. Focus group discussions – Phase 3: Building distributed leadership in designing and implementing a quality management framework for online learning environments
6. Report on survey of ACODE institutional representatives at Australian universities

7. Holt, D., Palmer, S. & Dracup, M. 'Leading an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder approach to evaluating the implementation of a new online learning environment: An Australian institutional case study'
8. Holt, D., Palmer, S. & Munro, J. (2011). Investigating key issues in developing distributed leadership capacity for the quality management of online learning environments. ASCILITE 2011 Workshop Proposal.
9. Profile matrix of managing OLE at partner institutions – as at February 2011
10. Learning technologies used across the sector – as at April 2011.

The project website is up to date, easily navigable and is fit for purpose as a work-a-day project website. The task now is to work with OLT to explore how the website might be developed to profile and highlight the academic outcomes of the project, especially the Framework and guidelines.

Outcome 4: Capacity building for distributed leadership and institutional transformation

The Framework was developed in a consultative manner in accordance with the principles of distributed leadership that underpinned the project. This was seen as a worthy approach because:

Without true distributed leadership ... both horizontally and vertically, OLE plans can be stifled and there can be a lack of take-up of teaching and learning technologies.

This project clearly operationalised the meaning of distributed leadership, which was defined in terms of the following characteristics:

1. Enables individual and collective agency
2. Co-created and shared vision
3. Inclusive of all those who lead
4. Broadest recognition of leadership
5. Communicative and engaging
6. Appropriate responsibilities
7. Meaningful rewards
8. Trusting and respectful
9. Collaborative in development
10. Nurturing of valued professional expertise
11. Valuing professional forums and communities
12. Continuity and sustainability.

It is fair to say that the distributed leadership dimension of this project raised as many questions as it answered:

How do you maintain distributed leadership when you have a new senior leadership team and they have more of a top-down approach? Does distributed leadership have to

rely on the informal or can it be incorporated into responsive, central teaching and learning structures?

One respondent thought that greater vision was called for:

It needed to be more forward looking. I think it needs a vision and a good story to go with it. Right now it's dry. Guides, frameworks and templates are good for stocktaking but they don't move you on. We need a vision about how to engage systems, distributed leadership and positional leadership.

The same person, and others, looked for specifics about how distributed leadership related to positional leadership in universities:

We work in a distributed leadership environment in universities, but we are not good at doing it. What the project needs to take into account is positional leadership. Neither positional nor distributed leadership can operate in isolation.

If they can come up with a real description of how distributed leadership can be used for OLEs it will be helpful ... Responsibility and accountability are not always attached to leadership at other levels across the ... University – different budget and resource models – it would be helpful if these things were made clearer as managers expect to be able to control the resources they pay for. So, leaders who need to work across universities, quite often filling 'influencer' roles, can have a lovely group of champions ... but it is worth asking: What's their leadership potential if they are managed 'locally' and competing with the central organisation that is trying to managing the OLE change?

There can be no doubt that participation in the project built awareness of distributed leadership in the participating universities and capacity to work in this manner:

I was particularly interested in the relationship between central governance structures and satellite campuses, where the opportunities to engage with formal leadership are limited. We find ourselves relying on informal relationships to get things done so the emphasis in this project on distributed leadership showed me that it's OK to rely on the informal as well as the formal. We need both.

As this project deployed the principles of distributed leadership, this audit report can, itself, unpack some of the answers to questions about distributed leadership. For example, participants valued the strong central direction and administrative support for the project:

Excellent time management and organisational skills; always 'ahead of' the project plan.

Strong central role in the drafting of the project documentation.

This suggests that distributed leadership is more than devolving duties to people who are already busy. Rather, it means that distributed leadership must be properly resourced with administrative support. One participant did question the assumption 'that the act of distributing leadership is positive'.

The application of distributed leadership to OLE management is more contestable than the original project proposal presumed because the competitors in this space are agile in ways that traditional universities are not. I can't be authoritative enough to say this, but it seems to me that our successful competitors operate on a business model of direct line management and not distributed leadership. I think these would be interesting ideas to tease out in publications that arise from this project.

So is distributed leadership an appropriate approach to change leadership in regard to the implementation and management of OLEs? Did distributed leadership actually work? Responses to the telephone interviews and self-completed questionnaires indicated that the participants in the project understood distributed leadership and its importance:

Regardless of the types of systems being used, there are significant advantages to be had by using a distributed leadership network to mediate the OLEs for an institution. OLEs may (do) change regularly, but having agreed structures within an institution should provide a level of stability to alleviate the impact of these changes on the users of the systems.

Got to see it holistically, with all elements mutually interacting and affecting each other, but Planning/Strategy, Governance and Evaluation are particularly important. In times of very rapid change, no one leader or small number of leaders can have all the answers. Distributed leadership is critically important to advance the quality of OLEs during major periods of renewal and transformation.

In contrast, the self-completed questionnaire revealed some concerns about lack of engagement:

I feel that about 90% of the work has been done by about 50% of the team.

If anything, the focus groups held by this project have highlighted in the minds of those involved that there is an issue here. The problem is that those who needed to hear this did not fully participate, or left midstream.

One participant also voiced concerns about the sustainability of distributed leadership because, 'it is closely linked to people, and people come and go'. Further, a notable number of respondents pointed to lack of engagement by senior leadership:

Since the commencement of the project, there has been a complete change in the university executive and major restructuring in all central areas. This has been a period of extended uncertainty and change, leading to many other agendas dominating the scene. It has been difficult getting the project back onto the agenda of senior staff.

Another respondent thought that the project was grounded in old methodology:

I was looking forward to this. It's very relevant and the project team has some highly regarded people in it. So I wasn't a disinterested observer, but I was disappointed. I thought the project wasn't forward looking. It was grounded in a project methodology that has been around for a while. What's this offering? What's different about this?

What's in it for my institution? I helped to workshop the framework with these questions but I haven't seen much change in the documentation. It's not a poor or a bad project. It just should have added more. ACODE had already done a lot- so has EDUCAUSE and JISC. I really struggle to see what this project was offering.

However, another respondent felt that the project had extended previous work:

This takes ACODE Benchmarks a bit further. For example, take the benchmark in relation to governance. The outcomes of this project now document: 'This is what you would typically see if a distributed network is working properly'.

The project proposal noted that 'the project will identify, work with, and develop the capacities of a range of institutional leaders who carry responsibility for the choice and effective implementation of OLEs in the higher education sector'. It also indicated that e-Learning technologies would be well integrated into a wide variety of academic practices and that there would be demonstrable benefits to student learning. These intentions were redirected because it became apparent that the project could not be transformational within each university within a short, two-year time frame.

Early on, the team at least tacitly set its sights on the key deliverable being the framework itself, and guidelines for more general implementation.

Even so, team members indicated that the project had been transformational at institutional level, particularly in regards to OLE implementation, management and, in particular, evaluation.

For some, albeit a minority, the evaluation of the technologies, themselves, in the process leading to the decision of an LMS, for instance, has been robust but evaluation to determine the actual use to which the technology has been put and its impact on student learning is less certain.

We introduced institutional evaluation surveying of our OLE.

We didn't make major changes. However, the project has provided a very valuable reflective opportunity and allowed us to fine tune processes. It has also alerted us to things we need to do in the future e.g. more comprehensive evaluation.

The impact [of the project] so far has been more at the personal level and more in the area of leadership than QA. The opportunity to participate in the project has caused me to rethink how my own work is aligned with that of colleagues, in particular in the learning and teaching and learning skills areas. Over the last year, I've found I'm more likely to respond to the 'teaching problems' that staff experience by bringing in support ... I've also spent more effort trying to transmit the 'message' up to program and college leaders.

Overall, it may be concluded that this project has made a useful contribution to collating research about distributed leadership in the domain of OLEs. It has also contributed to capacity building about distributed leadership in participating universities.

Where to from here?

This project is significant because it addresses the need for good practice in the implementation and management of OLEs, which have import for student learning outcomes. It has established a strong evidence base and added to OLT's already extensive database on leadership. There was a sense of frustration among project team members that the outcomes risk lying on shelves collecting dust. There is a mood to do something decisive with the outcomes of this and other leadership projects and to do so in collaboration with OLT and with professional organisations such as ASCILITE and ACODE. So the answers to questions about 'where to go from here' lie in dissemination strategies that will require additional funding. In addition to the publications which could and should arise from this project, team members suggested dissemination strategies that included an interactive website and OLT colloquia.

There was considerable agreement about the importance of engaging senior staff in the dissemination of the outcomes of this project and also acknowledgment that this can be difficult to do: 'Getting to very senior university leadership is always very hard for ALTC/OLT projects'. However, given the centrality of OLE implementation and management to the future of Australian universities, it seems the need to engage senior staff is now 'front, left and centre' of the way forward.

Of course, senior leaders have their own constraints in managing the quality of OLEs because competition between universities has become intense in the online space nationally and globally ... So left and right field it's about global e-Learning. The whole issue of clarifying vision, mission and strategy around OLEs is now more important than ever, and reinforced the planning element as being pivotal in our whole framework. Those international players moving into this space come with very focused strategies. They are highly specialised and agile. We are at a tipping point now with the effective leadership of OLEs. We can't avoid or ignore this – unless you have robust distributed leadership you'll struggle in this environment that requires multiple points of leadership intelligence, well interconnected, to respond effectively to such mounting competition, particularly in the traditional off-campus student market.

Given the importance of the topic, it might be advisable to move beyond professional development and dissemination strategies to a consideration of how the outcomes might be scaled-up, in collaboration with TEQSA, to make Australian universities accountable for their standards of management of OLEs. Finding some way to engage all relevant staff in the implementation and management of OLEs will ensure that learning and teaching outcomes are afforded the prominence they deserve. They are, after all, the main reason for implementing and upgrading online learning environments.

References

- Barr, R. B. & Tagg, J. (1995) *From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education*. Retrieved 21 October 2012, from the World Wide Web: <http://ilte.ius.edu/pdf/barrtagg.pdf>
- Fullan, M. & Scott, G. (2009). *Turnaround Leadership for Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hunt, L. (2006). A community development model of change: The role of teaching and learning centres. In L. Hunt (Ed.) *The Realities of Change in Higher Education: Interventions to promote learning and teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Hunt, L. & Peach, N. (2009). Planning for a sustainable academic future. In iPED Research Network (Eds.). *Academic Futures: Inquiries into higher education and pedagogy*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Tagg, J. (2003) *The Learning Paradigm College*. Boston, Mass: Anker.
- Universities UK Efficiency and Modernisation Task Group. (2011). *Efficiency and Effectiveness In Higher Education*, London: Universities UK. Retrieved 20 October 2012, from the World Wide Web: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/EfficiencyinHigherEducation.aspx

Appendix 1: Self-completed questionnaire results

- The questionnaire was sent to all members of the project team.
- All replied.
- The numbers in brackets refer to the number of similar comments. As the qualitative analysis of comments was completed by one person, the numbers should be regarded as indicative of trends rather than absolute.
- Some verbatim comments have been included in the results to clarify meaning.

Which three aspects of the project would you most like to highlight for inclusion in the audit report?

- Effective leadership and project management (7)
- Outcomes (6)

That the proposed framework does provide a way forward for institutions ... this would not require a big change, but it may provide some stability

- Collegiality and teamwork (4)
- Data collection (3)
- Varied nature of participating universities (2)

This has helped make the [framework] widely applicable across the sector

- Literature review (1)

What would you say are the most important goals of the project?

- Developing and validating the Framework (8)

... highlight the significant variables that can be accounted for in management of OLEs

- Illustrating aspects of distributed leadership (3)

That it highlights, very strongly, the need for senior management to engage the distributed leadership network in relation to OLEs

- Accommodating institutional perspectives (2)
- Identifying the importance of informal relationships in leadership (1)
- Getting an understanding of the status of OLEs in the higher education sector (1)

What are the three most important insights that the project has provided for you about OLE leadership and management?

- The importance of distributed leadership (12)

Without true distributed leadership being disseminated both horizontally and vertically, OLE plans can be stifled and there can be a lack of take-up of teaching and learning technologies ... wide disparity in perceptions between those in central positions and those in faculty positions... concerned about the

sustainability of distributed leadership... because ... people come and go

- Interrelationship of all elements of the Framework (5)

An articulation of the main organisation and cultural issues and elements that need to be considered within the management of online learning environments

- Other universities struggle with the same issues (4)
- Importance of evaluation and action-learning cycle (2)
- Need for a clear OLE plan (1)

... which determines the direction of online teaching and learning technologies; research on what's appearing on the horizon, how they are going to be trialled, implemented, used and retired, and that without this being addressed the direction gets muddled inside the overall University's Strategic Plan or the ICT plan

What are the major changes that you or your university made to OLE quality assurance, leadership and management practice as a consequence of this project?

- No major change but enhanced reflection on processes (7)

Due to major executive changes and ... restructures... have had little opportunity to disseminate the project findings

This has been a period of extended uncertainty and change ... It has been difficult getting the project back onto the agenda of senior staff

- More comprehensive evaluation of OLE (4)
- Greater involvement of senior executive (1)
- Identification and empowerment of change agents (1)

How do you perceive the relative importance of the institutional outcomes of the project and those associated with the development of the Framework?

- Most important to develop Framework for benefit of sector (6)

The institutional impacts are likely to be longer term ... the form and nature of any impact of the framework will be strongly mediated by those in senior formal leadership roles

Which aspects of the Framework do you think will be most helpful in the implementation and management of OLEs in Australian universities?

- Abbreviated version of Framework and checklists (4)
- Holistic and systematic approach (3)

It's like a car. If you're missing one of the wheels the car can't make the journey very well

- The distributed learning principles (1)

- Clarification of cyclical planning (1)

What would you identify as the greatest barriers to the use of the Framework both within your university and in Australian universities more generally?

- Senior executive restructuring (change) and attitudes (6)
Until the churn stops it's difficult to see the debate shifting to using some agreed platforms
The tendency for pragmatism to override systematic planning and evaluation
- Resources (2)
Resourcing seems to be a key pressure point in the quality management of OLEs
- Contextualising the Framework (2)
- Rate of technological change
By the time an OLE plan was written, it would almost be out of date

Please identify the three most effective aspects of project leadership and project management

- Project management skills (9)
Excellent time management and organisational skills; always 'ahead of' the project plan
Strong central role in the drafting of the project documentation
- Project leadership (3)
Enthusiastic and un-flagging guidance and shepherding from Dale Holt
- Consultative communication strategies (3)
- Clarity about goals and responsibilities (2)
- Distributed responsibilities/collaboration (2)
One could say they have eaten their own dog food (it's been distributed)
- Respectful (2)
- Regular and consistent meetings with firm follow-up (2)

Please identify three aspects of project leadership and management that might be improved in future projects of this nature.

- No improvements needed (4)
I would be hard pressed to see how you could have a better project manager, or project leader
- Earlier feedback (1)
Earlier, more visible and shared understanding of quality management and/or improvement as a construct underpinning the framework
- More dissemination (1)

- More external feedback (1)
- More equal participation (1)

I feel that about 90% of the work has been done by about 50% of the team

The identified context of the project includes a range of variables that may be relevant to the implementation and use of the Framework. These include:

- different learning management systems and approaches to social networking
- different stages of deploying next generation online learning environments
- different groupings of institutions
- disparate leadership groups for implementing online learning environments.

- Strength (8)

I think the framework provides a way to mediate all these aspects at an institutional level

- Created difficulties (2)

Diversity also worked against any uniform or consistent approach to trialling [the framework]

How would you rate the level of awareness of the project and its outcomes at your university and in the Australian higher education sector?

- Quite good due to work through ACODE (3)

The framework ... via focus groups and ...the ACODE Representative Survey, was reviewed and commented on by over 130 higher education staff of various levels from within central or faculty locations within their institutions. I think awareness levels of the project were high

- More work needs to be done with dissemination (5)
- Relatively low (1)

If you were to participate in a similar project in future what would you do differently?

- Project team members would need to give more time (3)
- Need high-level 'champions' within each university (2)
- Disseminate the various discussions and findings at the local level (1)
- Find alternatives to data gathering through focus groups (1)
- Formal strategy for the scholarly publication of the project work and outcomes (1)

Appendix 2: Telephone interview questions and results

Telephone interview questions

Introduction

- I will note down your answers to questions
- I will check with you by follow-up email that I have accurately transcribed your responses
- No material will be included in the report that has not been confirmed by you
- All responses will be anonymous.

All project participants

1. I have a series of questions that I can ask. These are based on the OLT guidelines for reviews. I will use them as prompts for our discussion. However, first of all, I should like you to begin with what you want to say about the project.
2. What is the significance and impact of the project?
3. What lessons have been learned from this project?
4. In which ways did the project build your capacity, and that of your university, in regards to distributed leadership and the implementation of OLEs?
5. What factors helped and hindered in the achievement of the outcomes?
6. How might student learning benefit from the outcomes of this project?
7. What post-project actions should be taken by you and the project team to promote the outcomes of the project across the sector?

Project leaders and managers

1. How has the partner profile matrix been used?
2. How have the outcomes of the Australian directors' survey been used?
3. Were there any variations from the processes that were initially proposed, and if so, why?
4. How did the project provide evidence to substantiate the validity and usefulness of the Framework and guidelines?
5. How well was the website used and how did it relate to the USQ CoP?
6. What plans are being made for post-project dissemination and promotion of outcomes?

Senior staff

1. What was the level of awareness of the project at your university?
2. What do you see as the significance of the project?
3. How important is distributed leadership to the quality implementation of OLEs?
4. What factors have enhanced or inhibited the development of the project at your university?

5. How might this project have been improved?
6. What do you think should now happen to promote and embed the outcomes of the project at your university and across the sector?

Telephone interviews results

Project team respondents

Respondent A

I felt myself to be the least experienced member of the team so I took more out than I put in. It was a wonderful opportunity to work with experienced people and to explore how institutions work and to find that others struggle with the same issues as us.

I was particularly interested in the relationship between central governance structures and satellite campuses, where the opportunities to engage with formal leadership are limited. We find ourselves relying on informal relationships to get things done so the emphasis in this project on distributed leadership showed me that it's OK to rely on the informal as well as the formal. We need both.

At my university we were already doing a good job of evaluation in the implementation of OLEs – making sure that goals were reached and so on. What we didn't do so well is see if projects had useful outcomes. The discussions around evaluation and its inclusion into the framework has been a confirmation of what we should be doing.

The pace of change is accelerating. Team members themselves experienced significant restructuring. This was all more dynamic than I had considered. How do you maintain distributed leadership when you have a new senior leadership team and they have more of a top-down approach? Does distributed leadership have to rely on the informal or can it be incorporated into responsive, central teaching and learning structures? If this project has an effect it will depend on pivotal senior people. The condensed Guidelines will be appealing. We'll get a lot more mileage out of the condensed version – it's the most practical.

Respondent B

The project began with particular senior institutional leadership and could be embedded in a supportive context relating to the implementation of a new institutional learning management system. Senior and operational institutional leadership changed through the first year of the project and original leadership connections were diminished. Major change at the University executive level has seen substantial new strategic direction setting and restructuring. Nobody at the top is appointed to maintain the status quo, and the University's current strategic plan was coming to an end. So a dominant concern was how distributed leadership could be reoriented and sustained in this emerging new context, and this clearly had implications for the positioning of the project in such an environment.

Of course, senior leaders have their own constraints in managing the quality of OLEs because competition between universities has become intense in the online space nationally and globally. The intensification of such competition became pronounced in the latter part of the project, and was a key point of discussion for project team members. It could be seen as a real challenge for senior leadership and for the project! So left and right field it's about global e-Learning. The whole issue of clarifying vision, mission and strategy around OLEs is now more important than ever, and reinforced the planning element as being pivotal in our whole framework. Those international players moving into this space come with very focused strategies. They are highly specialised and agile. We are at a tipping point now with the effective leadership of OLEs. We can't

avoid or ignore this – unless you have robust distributed leadership you'll struggle in this environment that requires multiple points of leadership intelligence, well interconnected, to respond effectively to such mounting competition, particularly in the traditional off-campus student market. Our project, therefore, effectively found itself sitting in a changed and massively altered institutional environment.

The project team has observed that any institution can have a macro direction but quality comes through to students at program level – through their disciplines. This is why staff need to be empowered to participate in distributed leadership processes. Having more people working collectively is the only thing that's going to work. While it is possible to set future institutional directions based on a small number of senior leaders, the value of such planning can only be realised through the combined efforts of the many who are involved directly in the learning and teaching experience. Those close to the educational action can also assess strategically pressures in their own disciplines and programs. Senior leadership can't have a big enough radar screen to see everything happening externally. The focus groups, representing a combination of leadership perspectives, showed this.

The focus groups were originally planned to be implemented by each university so that they could respond to their own needs. Originally the project had planned for grounded action learning and for partner universities to run things in their own way. It was to be distributed leadership in action. In fact, some funding could have been used by partner institutions to run their own focus groups, but the team quickly decided that it would be best for the lead institution to oversee all data collection and reporting. This led to a higher level of consistency of approaches. Also, devolved action learning focus groups may not have been as effective given changing institutional circumstances. So the focus groups became a place to test drive the framework to see how it might work in local settings. What was planned as a final round of focus groups was turned into a round of interviews to get more detailed information, and this proved an effective strategy.

Respondent C

The greatest benefit is in highlighting the variables one should take into account. The project stressed the systemic nature of the variables associated with the successful implementation of OLEs. It's impossible to look at one without the other. The project came at an interesting time. The world has changed in the lifetime of the project and, at my institution, we were implementing a new LMS. So the idea that we need to think about system variables or sub-systems within the governance of OLEs gave rise to some interesting questions.

Whilst much was already known about distributed leadership, the project has added value to thinking about broad whole-of-institution involvement in the implementation and maintenance of OLEs – particularly by very senior people. For example, ACODE has done a lot of work in this area but when we did our ACODE benchmarking, it didn't include the most senior leaders. But, in regard to much of this being already known, I always like to think in terms of the half-life of academic development knowledge – which is about ten years. The lessons about distributed leadership need to be repeated and reinforced.

At an institutional level the evaluation aspect was most important to us. We had a major project going and working with this team validated what we were doing but also reminded us of things we didn't plan so well. What stakeholder evaluation do we need? What data do we require? What data will tell us we've succeeded? We really should have done this earlier in the piece. We've now included a strong attempt to gauge student opinion about the consequences of how we manage OLEs.

We've got a long way to go compared to the work being done in the UK. Here in Australia much of the student engagement work is about their psychological engagement whereas it's really about the integration of services that support them. It's

also about who is the right person (or department) for the job. Here at my university ICT wanted to take charge of the implementation of the new LMS and we had to persuade the university that the task is 20% technical and 80% to do with change leadership that will result in enhanced student learning opportunities.

The OLT project itself went well. Regular teleconferences made it comfy to maintain a dialogue. We were, of course, hindered by the time constraints of our work at institutional level, but there were two of us involved which meant that one of us would normally be available. It was difficult to organise the focus groups – getting 15 busy people together at one time was very difficult.

The project now needs prominence somewhere – maybe in web format – something interactive. I'm not sure that it should be buried on the OLT website. Maybe something like JISC needs to happen which the *Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education* report cited as an organisation that provides 'collaborative advantage'. We really need to afford the sector the opportunity to use the tool.

Respondent D

The team itself was a good set of people. Everyone had good input and kept their interest in the project. The regular fortnightly meetings helped in this. We developed a really collegial team and people felt encouraged and motivated without feeling harassed. Dale and Stuart really did 'do' distributed leadership.

The focus groups were planned to be run about different themes but the feedback from participating universities was that key senior people couldn't get together at the appointed times so in the final phase we switched to targeted individual interviews and this way we got richer data from quite senior people.

In regard to senior leadership we got a double whammy. Not only was it a struggle to get on their radar in the first instance but some universities then had massive restructure and change so that our champion base disintegrated. We were left hanging.

The partner profile matrix helped us to understand each other. We found that many of us were in the same boat in regard to OLEs and that we shared many issues.

Respondent E

The project has provided a recognised structure that could be applied. This has the potential to be THE book that a manager would pick up, but it needs to be promoted in that way so that a new DVC would say: 'This is what I'm going to implement'.

Much of the content is not original, rather it's a synthesis. It brings together these things for the first time in one spot.

This takes ACODE Benchmarks a bit further. For example, take the benchmark in relation to governance. The outcomes of this project now document: 'This is what you would typically see if a distributed network is working properly'.

It needs more high-level endorsement.

There has been huge churn, even at the universities of the project team. What did I learn from the project? We learned from each other – particularly that we are all in the same boat.

Respondent F

When asked to participate, I was thinking in terms of a central project run by Deakin

with participating universities used as case studies. It wasn't quite like that and I couldn't put in the same amount of effort as others. We've all had different levels of levels of involvement – mine not as big as others – but the project accommodated to the level at which people could commit. There was no pressure. The way Dale managed that has been good. Management of the project has been exceptional. This really made a difference in terms of everything happening on task, yet I never felt harassed or pushed.

Dale had the right kind of push and pull. It's amazing that he could maintain the momentum of the project in the face of changes at his own university. That really needs to be acknowledged. Change could have got in the way, but they didn't allow it to affect the project.

It has been interesting to participate because of the work we are doing at our university. The Project helped in terms of scoping our task and we'll use the framework as a model. It will be a useful starting point and resource.

I'm a bit ambivalent about all leadership projects. We've got so much written from every angle. This one does contribute around issues associated with OLEs. So it was helpful to me at institutional level because I'm trying to get whole-of-university understanding around the directions my university should take with OLEs. But, more generally, every university has a different culture, different structures and history. You have to be able to pick and choose from a generic Framework.

I didn't learn lessons from the leadership side of the project. That wasn't where my interests lay. I was more interested in institutional systems and change processes. The OLE focus was significant for me. If I hadn't been involved in the Project, I wouldn't have gained insight into practice at five other universities.

Post-project, OLT needs to get involved. ALTC used to do this with colloquia. It would be helpful if OLT facilitated a colloquium for a couple of days of presentations and discussion. They would need to invite DVCs, PVCs and academic developers. Or they could do something like the HEA annual conference where those who had developed HEA-funded projects speak. We haven't got anything like that.

Respondent G

The project is important because distributed leadership will become increasingly important as universities develop more reliance on technology. The changes are huge. One third of the planet is now internet connected – at least through mobile phones and Melbourne Uni enrolled 35,000 students in three weeks into its open source courses – that's almost as many as the whole university!

There needed to be more flexibility and an open perspective about the capacity of the framework to lead universities. In any case this is close to quality frameworks that have been around for decades. It might have been better to build on a broadly acknowledged framework – there are some well-established ones in the IT sector that might be used. At ACODE the different universities struggled to see the value of the framework. It got them to thinking about distributed leadership, but they were not galvanised.

The application of distributed leadership to OLE management is more contestable than the original project proposal presumed because the competitors in this space are agile in ways that traditional universities are not. I can't be authoritative enough to say this, but it seems to me that our successful competitors operate on a business model of direct line management and not distributed leadership. I think these would be interesting ideas to tease out in publications that arise from this project.

The project tackled an area where there is relatively little understanding and it tackled a vexatious issue. The problem is this: OLEs have a lot of budget implications so even the best laid plans can get overwhelmed by senior leadership decisions – distributed

leadership is subject to the whims of university management. We saw that happen in this project which, even with the very best of intentions, found that the deck chairs shifted and the project lost relevance in some of the partner institutions.

This project sought extensive feedback and people really did help with detailed critique. I thought that, at times, the feedback was only selectively addressed. The framework was held on to rather than being subject to continued refinement. For example, I would make some aspects less confusing. The graphic flow is not straightforward. What do the arrows mean? I would also simplify the outcomes. The guidelines need to be developed with the same eye to learning outcomes that we would have if we were preparing courses for our students.

Respondent H

The process has gone very, very well. Judy Munro has been particularly effective and keeps us all on task. What worked was having regular meetings and factoring-in face-to-face meetings. That's needed early to support collaboration. It paid dividends.

Dale's been good at leading the project. He has provided the enthusiasm and he always came-up with early examples to provide us with the scope and depth of what was required. They really stuck to deadlines and this pays-off when we are required to meet them.

The project was well budgeted and provided support for analysing information and lining-up drafts for comment. Also support for contingencies and face-to-face conferences at key milestones.

The Reference Group have been included in all our group meetings. They were particularly good at providing feedback. They've given very good comments. Of course, it helps to have them on board to disseminate information about the project.

This project is going to be useful even though there's nothing new in the Framework itself. What's useful in this is the distributed leadership approach and showing how to get it to work. That's the most important thing – we've talked of getting examples and strategies to help others implement this approach.

Through this project, I got a more nuanced understanding of distributed leadership in the complex environment of learning technologies. My understanding was vague when we first started. In the end it's all come together: it's getting connections going that's important!

I found evaluation interesting – none of us were doing it effectively. We know we should do it but the question is: How can we do it effectively?

Outcomes? What did they produce? – Guides, Framework, two or three conference papers, journal articles and focus groups. These were good. They got people together. It highlighted this division between central services and on-the-ground academics. There were very different perspectives from central groups and faculties about the information collected and also the effectiveness of dissemination. There's not enough talking. This came out in the focus groups. It was good to bring that out and to realise that the perception of central services was different to what central services think of themselves. At our place we had everything in place for our own changes. For us the value was in reflection, refinement and reinforcement that we were heading in the right directions. It was nice to reflect and think: 'Yes! We've done that'.

Student learning outcomes? Well this is about infrastructure. Students will benefit if we get it right. We've provided a framework and a process to enhance quality – that's how they'll benefit.

The project is timely because it reminds us of the collegiality of universities. We have demonstrated what collegiality might look like through distributed leadership.

There is a big problem with these projects. We get evidence and disseminate it but we are so busy on the project we can really only think about dissemination when we are finished. By then we are out of budget. I'd like to see something like the Learning Space Forum that ALTC organised. Those things help projects to disseminate their work.

There's certainly a case for taking this Framework and doing an audit of all universities or looking at what's needed at different universities. There could be a second stage to this project. Certainly there are publications to come. We collected a lot of valuable information.

External respondents

Respondent I

This work is important because of the enormous growth in online delivery. We need work on standards and enhancing the quality of OLEs, but, at an institutional level, the focus groups were underwhelming. We lost goodwill. These were senior, busy people. The discussion started too low. A small amount of pre-reading about the local context would have raised the level of discussion so that participants in the focus group could have discussed not just what they have done but how they would like to improve and extend on systems. The way it was done didn't offer anything to those who had already lived through the processes. There is little value in gathering information about low-level activity. We need to build on good practice and pose the next level of questions.

If comments had been gathered after focus group one, or even focus group two, the later one could have been improved. Formative evaluation along the way is useful – otherwise it's too challenging for individuals to remember the impact of a session over a year later. At the second focus group it seemed there had been no synthesis from the first focus group so it was hard to get continuity. After that, people wouldn't come anymore. It's about valuing people's time. This doesn't help to improve the profile of OLT projects and it didn't help us to raise the profile of learning and teaching. There must be a value for people who come along. This didn't stretch their brains at all. It needed more formative evaluation just to prompt people to reflect.

Respondent J

It was a job worth doing to bring attention to the issues. We work in a distributed leadership environment in universities, but we are not good at doing it. What the project needs to take into account is positional leadership. Neither positional nor distributed leadership can operate in isolation. They've done a good job – put useful things together. It got people together and they learned. It drew things together and we now don't have to go looking, but if this project hadn't happened there's enough out there to be able to get on with it. It needed to be more forward looking. I think it needs a vision and a good story to go with it. Right now it's dry. Guides, frameworks and templates are good for stocktaking but they don't move you on. We need a vision about how to engage systems, distributed leadership and positional leadership.

At institutional level this was a useful stocktaking exercise for us. What do we do? How do we do it? How do we evaluate? What do we do about quality management of OLEs? It helped us to reflect and revealed some gaps, which was good. But, from where I sit, it will not help me. So what do I do now? I'm not sure we'll use the outputs. It's all been done before. There is already a lot of information about distributed leadership and I wanted something different and new.

I was looking forward to this. It's very relevant and the project team has some highly regarded people in it. So I wasn't a disinterested observer, but I was disappointed. I thought the project wasn't forward looking. It was grounded in a project methodology that has been around for a while. What's this offering? What's different about this?

What's in it for my institution? I helped to workshop the framework with these questions but I haven't seen much change in the documentation. It's not a poor or a bad project. It just should have added more. ACOE had already done a lot- so has EDUCAUSE and JISC. I really struggle to see what this project was offering.

Respondent K

I don't have a sense of how the project will finally be distributed as I know that a lot of dissemination comes later anyway. The focus groups have in their own way been a 'dissemination' as you get feedback about how your University compares with another etc. without going too deep into detail or specifics – which is reassuring. The draft model looks interesting. It will be useful having the Framework and Guidelines. If they can come up with a real description of how distributed leadership can be used for OLEs it will be helpful. The group will need to unpack the complexities of universities generally-how they are structured and restructured and the impact this has on distributed leadership. It's easy to put up successful case studies but universities have to be recognised as individually complex places. Responsibility and accountability are not always attached to leadership at other levels across the organisation of a University – different budget and resource models – it would be helpful if these things were made clearer as managers expect to be able to control the resources they pay for. So, leaders who need to work across universities, quite often filling 'influencer' roles, can have a lovely group of champions of associate deans or others etc., but it is worth asking: 'What's their leadership potential if they are managed "locally" and competing with the central organisation that is trying to manage the OLE change?'