



TEACHING & LEARNING  
RESEARCH INITIATIVE  
NĀU I WHATU TE KĀKAHU, HE TĀNIKO TAKU

## CASE STUDY 1

# Enhancing student learning in a first-year hospitality paper:

Institutional Report on the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Initiative at the AUT University<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative project: Unlocking Student Learning: The Impact of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Initiatives on First-year University Students.



# The context

The paper that has been the focus of the AUT University case study is 215810: Introduction to Hospitality Management. It is a compulsory first-year paper in the School of Hospitality and Tourism and was nominated by the Faculty of Applied Humanities in August 2005 on the following grounds:

The issue of concern with this paper is the very low pass rate, for example 40% pass rate this semester.

Has been ongoing concerns with this paper over several years.

The School has identified there is a problem through exam board results and through student feedback.

At this time the School decided that a different teacher (Chris) should be assigned to the paper, and this circumstance is a distinctive feature of the AUT case study. At the other universities participating in this project, the academic developers have worked with a teacher who had taught the paper previously and is continuing to do so. The change of teacher at the outset of this case study has had implications for aspects of the academic development work and the research methodology. It is important to note that the previous teacher, in response to student performance data, student feedback on the paper and teaching, and an external moderator's report, had anticipated making a number of changes to address the concerns identified.

Chris had taught other papers in the School since 1990 and from the outset has been an enthusiastic, highly committed member of the project team. Four members of the Centre for Educational and Professional Development (CEPD)<sup>2</sup> are the other members of the team, with two (Amanda and Brendan) having the central academic developer roles. The director of the Centre (Lois) has participated in key team meetings and has taken a particular interest in policy, as well as CEPD and wider institutional considerations that have arisen during the project. The other CEPD member (David) has assumed an overall project and research management role.

## What did the collaboration involve?

The collaboration, which commenced in August 2005 and is ongoing, has had the following features. Amanda and Brendan have engaged intensively with Chris throughout this period, with the focus of their work reflecting their roles within CEPD and their respective areas of expertise and experience:

- Brendan: learning and teaching, curriculum development and review, assessment evaluation, and appraisal of papers and teaching
- Amanda: learning and teaching, language and culture issues related to learning and teaching in a multicultural classroom.

The focus of their work has overlapped at times, and all of the CEPD team contributed on occasions to the academic development agenda.

For the first two iterations of the paper during 2006, the academic developers and Chris collaborated in the development of numerous Teaching and Learning Enhancement Initiatives (TLEIs) that were wide ranging in their focus. The latter included the learning outcomes for the paper, assessment tasks, feedback to students, new learning resources, language/vocabulary development, teaching and learning strategies in general, and Māori conceptions of hospitality. Within these areas, quite specific TLEIs were developed. For example, a succession of four staged tasks was developed to provide early opportunities for students to receive formative feedback. Language-related matters that were addressed in some of the early TLEIs became the main, although not exclusive, focus of further TLEIs during 2007/08.

The broad aims of the TLEIs were:

- achieving a closer internal alignment between paper learning outcomes, content and assessment, and greater coherence in the relationship between the paper and the programme as a whole,

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<sup>2</sup> A review of CEPD led to the establishment, in 2010, of the Centre for Learning and Teaching with consequent changes to some staff roles.

- addressing the academic literacy development needs of students who had diverse linguistic backgrounds,
- extending the repertoire of learning and teaching approaches that can be used flexibly to meet the learning needs of a multi-level class.

There were variable levels and forms of academic developer input into these TLEIs. For some TLEIs, much of the initial thinking and decision making was done by Chris, and the academic developers' input was less substantial—although not necessarily of lesser significance. As Chris confirmed, having an audience for his ideas and prospective decisions, along with affirmation of their appropriateness and feasibility, can be a very helpful input into a TLEI. In contrast, for some TLEIs the academic developers taught Chris particular ideas and skills. For example, when helping Chris formulate new learning outcomes, Brendan introduced him to a framework for conceptualising and writing learning outcomes and then facilitated his thinking and decision making about them. Direct teaching input also applied to the design of multi-choice tests and the use of a tool for assessing the vocabulary demands of a text.

Overall, the ways in which the academic developers sought to influence Chris's thoughts and actions in relation to TLEIs were extremely varied. The different kinds of academic development practice evident during the project reflected such factors as:

- the academic developers' personal conceptions of their role and how it should be enacted
- their perception of the status of Chris's experience and expertise
- the nature of his requests and expectations for particular forms of support
- the activities deemed necessary for conceiving, planning and implementing particular TLEIs
- different interpersonal styles.

Academic development occurred in a variety of contexts, which included one-on-one meetings, phone conversations, email exchanges and team meetings. The meetings were occasions for reporting and reflecting on past activities, sharing and reacting to data and interpretations, and anticipating and planning future activities. They helped sustain the project's momentum, ensured that we co-ordinated our activities, and contributed to the very positive working relations that have been evident throughout.

There was a constant concern to maintain the authenticity of the academic development practices and to ensure that honesty and integrity characterised all communications and relationships. On reflection, however, we can perceive both positive and negative effects of the research dimension on the academic development practices.

## What has the research involved?

The research<sup>3</sup> has been undertaken within a social constructionist paradigm based on the idea that there are multiple, socially constructed realities. In this instance, a key purpose of the research was to uncover the constructed realities of academic developers, teachers and students in relation to TLEIs. With respect to epistemology, researchers and subjects were perceived as interdependent, and subjectivity was necessarily involved in identifying and interpreting others' constructions of reality.

The inquiry process was action research, with the focus of successive cycles being determined by the emerging hunches (theses) and questions of Chris and the academic developers concerning TLEIs that might enhance students' learning. In turn, those questions shaped the data that we gathered and subsequent analyses.

The data that we gathered from the academic developers, the teacher and the students concerned

- a. influences on their perceptions, thoughts and actions,
- b. interactions between the academic developers and the teacher and between the teacher and students,
- c. outcomes of these interactions.

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<sup>3</sup> A more detailed account of the research is provided in a paper by Haigh and Naidoo (2007a).

The data set included qualitative and quantitative data and was obtained from a range of sources using varied methods. Data concerning the academic developers' thoughts and actions was obtained from documents (meeting records, emails, diary notes), interviews and questionnaires. There were similar sources of data for the teacher, supplemented with documents and resources for the paper, in-class observations and stimulated recall records. Student data sources included documents (enrolment records, retention statistics and assessment results), institutional student feedback questionnaires, other TLEI-related questionnaires, focus group interviews, and teacher observations. As we were aware that it would be difficult to determine in advance exactly what data might provide convincing evidence of links between the thoughts and actions of the academic developers, teacher and students, we endeavoured to capture a very wide range of potentially relevant data. Our data analyses included descriptive statistics and variants of deductive and inductive qualitative analyses (e.g. constant comparison, content analysis). This summary report provides a distilled account of the extensive data gathered which is reported more fully in several conference presentations and papers (Haigh. et.al., 2006; Haigh and Neill, 2006; Haigh and Naidoo, 2007b; Haigh, 2007).

## What did we find? What were the research outcomes?

As noted above, there were two broad phases in this project. In the first phase (2005–2006), a wide array of TLEIs were planned and implemented with the hope that they would lead to an overall improvement in students' learning performance and aspects of their qualitative experience of learning. Changes to learning outcomes were also made to improve the relevance and value of the students' learning. In the second phase (2007–2008), the TLEIs mainly—but not exclusively—had a language-related focus. General findings for these phases are now summarised, and a comparison is then made of student data for 2006 and 2008. The latter provides evidence of the trends and stability in the data across the 3 years.

### Phase One: 2004–2006

Figure 2 shows the number of students enrolled and the percentage who passed during 2004–2006, and Figure 3 shows the grade distributions for students who completed successfully in the same period. Clearly there were significant improvements in these two indices during 2006, which were also accompanied by a small gain in overall student satisfaction (Figure 4)<sup>4</sup>. The satisfaction rating was derived from an institutional Annual Survey of Programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> As the change in percentage of successful completion for 2005 to 2006a/b was so marked, a statistics test was not used to determine the significance of difference.

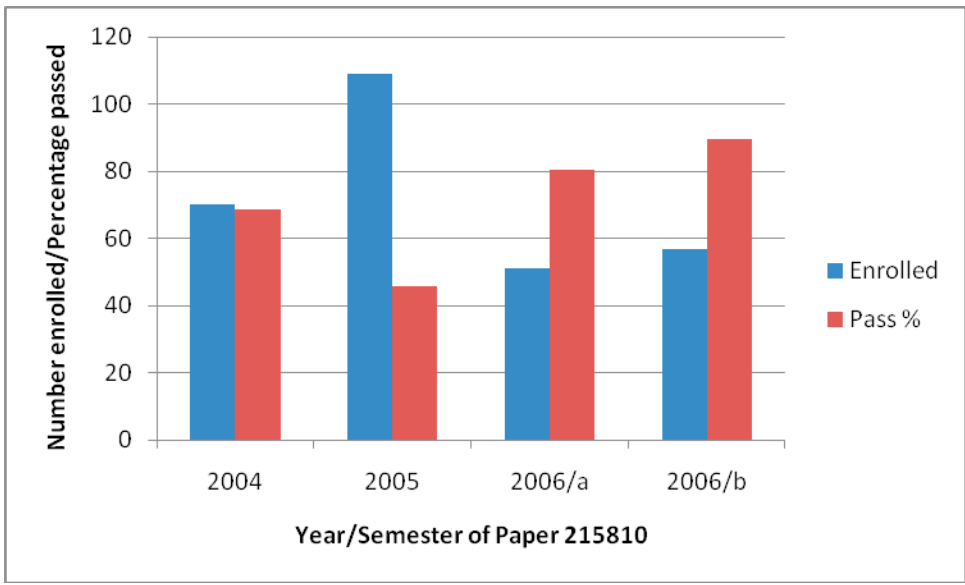


Figure 2: Number of students enrolled and the percentage who passed in Paper 21580 during 2004 - 2006  
 Note: In 2006 the paper was offered on two occasions: First semester (a) and second semester (b).

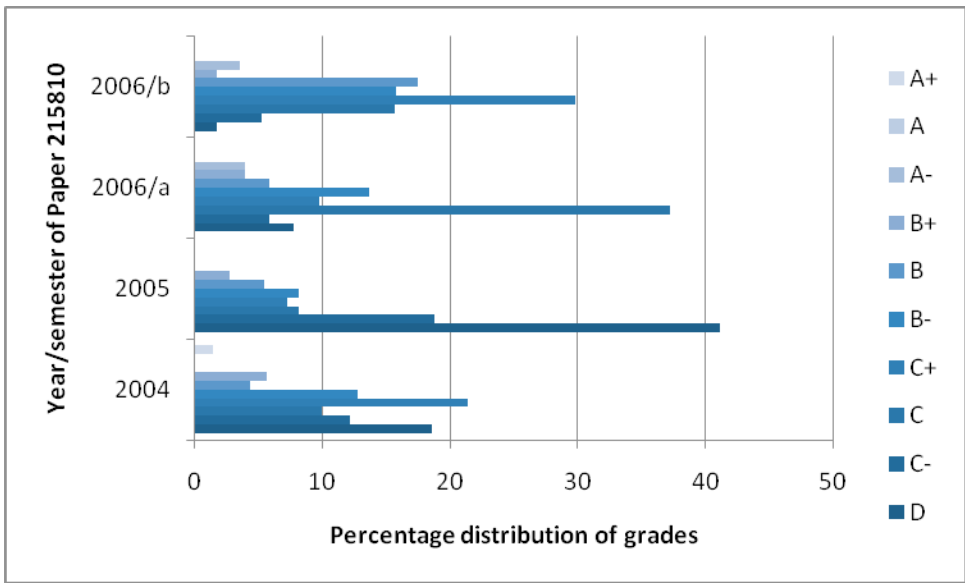


Figure 3: Percentage distribution of grades in Paper 215810 during 2004-2006

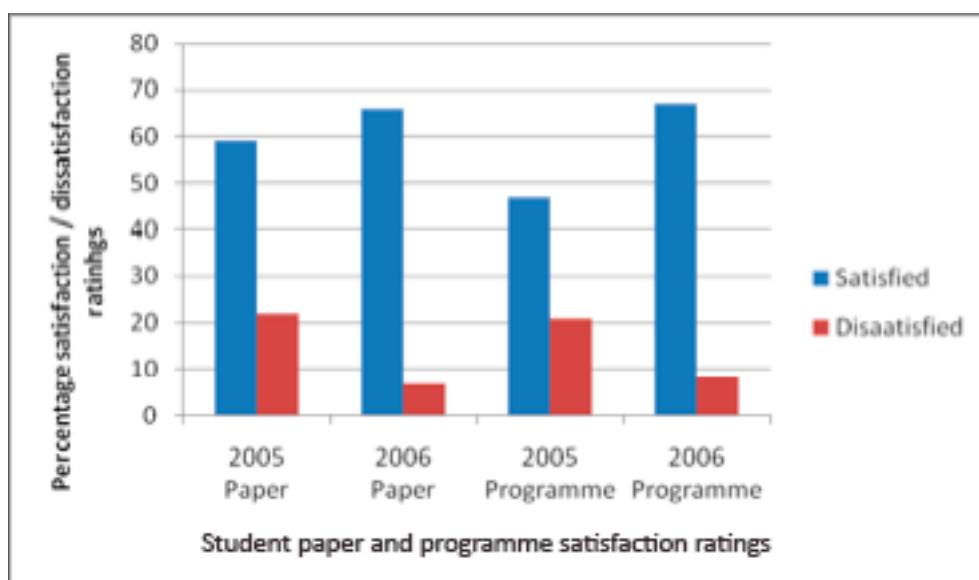


Figure 4: Overall student satisfaction/dissatisfaction with paper 215810 and the Hospitality undergraduate programme, 2005–2006

Note: Mean satisfaction with paper (5 point scale): 2005 = 3.52; 2006 = 3.86<sup>5</sup>

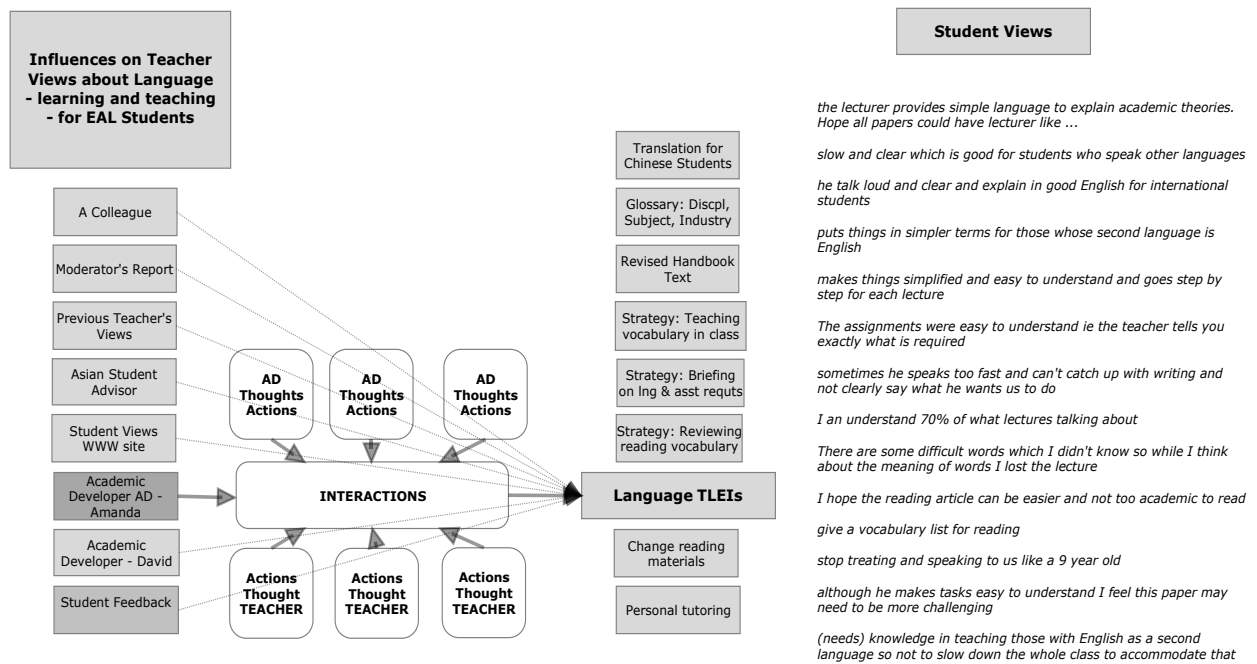
The question we needed to ask was: To what extent can these gains be attributed, at least in part, to the actions of the academic developer? The explanation potentially lies in specific TLEIs the academic developers assisted Chris to conceive and implement, but there are other possible explanations, which include Chris's personal attributes, which differed from those of the previous teacher; the backgrounds of the 2005/06 cohorts of students; and other (i.e. non-academic developer) influences on Chris's thoughts and actions.

With respect to the student profile, data gathered at enrolment on student background (domestic/international, part time/full time, gender, age range, disability, English or Māori as first language, ethnicity) for 2005 and 2006 were relatively stable, apart from an increase in the proportion of students who identified their ethnicity as Asian (43.9 to 55.3 percent). This followed a similar increase from 2004 to 2005 (37.5 to 43.9 percent), which was likely to bring with it an increase in the percentage of EAL students. Unfortunately, while English-language status was a factor in the enrolment data, it was not reliable because over 50 percent of students did not declare their status on this factor.

However, a language status and needs survey questionnaire was subsequently used to gain more accurate and comprehensive data on this factor, as the development of TLEIs to address the needs of these students became a primary concern for Chris and Amanda throughout 2006. Whether students identified as international students was also potentially relevant to the status of students' language background. Although the proportion of students identified as international was stable through 2005 and 2006, there was a marked decline in 2007 (of 27.6 percent), and this also became a factor that had a significant impact on matters that Chris and the academic developers considered as they developed and fine-tuned TLEIs.

Figure 5 shows the multiple sources of influence on Chris's thoughts and actions that were identified during the project in relation to TLEIs that focused on language matters during this period (Haigh, 2007a). Clearly, any changes in student performance and qualitative experience of learning could not be attributed only to the academic developers' engagement with the teacher.

<sup>5</sup> It was not possible to compare the means using a t-test as individual ratings, which were included in an institutional Annual Programme Survey, were not available.



**Figure Two: Language-Related TLEIs - Analysis**

Figure 5: Analysis of influences, interactions and outcomes for language-related Teaching and Learning Enhancement Initiatives

## What data might help verify the influence of the academic developers on student learning?

There were two steps to be traced here:

- the influence of the academic developers on Chris's thoughts and actions in relation to the TLEIs
- the influence of those Thought TLEIs, when implemented, on students' learning experience and overall performance.

The academic developers' influences on Chris are captured in:

- the records of their interactions with him
- evidence of the his actual implementation of collaboratively developed TLEIs (observations and artefacts)
- Chris's self-reports of the academic developers' influence on his thoughts and actions.

Appendix 1 provides a sample of data that show evidence of academic developer influence in relation to TLEIs that were intended to provide vocabulary development support (for EAL students in particular), including through the provision of a glossary.

## Evidence of the influence of the TLEIs on students' experience of learning

Evidence is available in the data from an institutional Student Evaluation of Paper (SEP) survey, a student appraisal of teaching questionnaire, a language needs analysis, focus group interviews, a delayed feedback questionnaire, teacher observations and evaluations, and student perceptions of reading surveys. Although there are some limitations in the data from each of these sources, there are clear consistencies across the data that do give grounds for a claim for links between academic developer-influenced TLEIs and students' experience of learning. A discussion of the data from three of these sources (SEP, student appraisal of teaching, focus groups) is presented below to illustrate the data that can be offered to support the claim.

## Student Evaluation of Paper (SEP)

This institutional questionnaire includes eight standard rating items (further optional items may be included) and two open-response questions (“What do you like best about this paper?” and “How could this paper be improved?”). Two purpose-designed open-ended items may also be added. Students rate their level of satisfaction in relation to each rating item on a seven-point rating scale. Processing and reporting are done by the university’s Institutional Research Unit.

A comparison of SEP data for 2005 and 2006 (Semester A) indicates the following.

- Despite the concerns about the pass and grade levels in 2005, there was a strong positive bias in students’ responses to the rating items in the measure. When OK and Good ratings are combined (ratings 4–7 on a seven-point scale), over 90 percent allocated these favourable ratings to three items: overall quality of teaching, availability of resources, and overall organisation. (See Figure 6 for a summary of rating items data for 2005–2006). In addition, over 90 percent of student would recommend the paper to others.
- For semester A, 2006, the same level of favourable rating was allocated to six items (recommend paper to others, overall quality of teaching, clear paper and goals, fair assessment requirements, overall workload, amount and quality of feedback). There were gains in rating for four aspects of the paper that were relevant to TLEIs being implemented at this time (clear paper goals and objectives, fair assessment requirements, overall workload, amount and quality of feedback). Comparable ratings were lower for two aspects (availability of resources, overall organisation), which may have been a result of the demands associated with introducing a wide range of TLEIs concurrently.
- When student qualitative comments on features of the paper they “like” are considered, 2005 responses indicate student appreciation of the overview of the content and its relevance/usefulness, along with the provision of real examples. A wide range of the teacher’s attributes were liked, including organisation, clarity of communication and enthusiasm/passion. Again, 2006 responses signal that some students were aware of, and appreciated, features that were associated with the TLEIs being implemented (provision of an overview of the paper and the programme it is embedded in, which is helpful for students choosing majors and careers; and teacher concern to make things clear/understandable, including in relation to assessment tasks).
- Students’ suggestions for improvements were predictably wide ranging, varied and sometimes conflicting. The most frequent concerned the nature and weighting of the assessment tasks and the availability of resources.

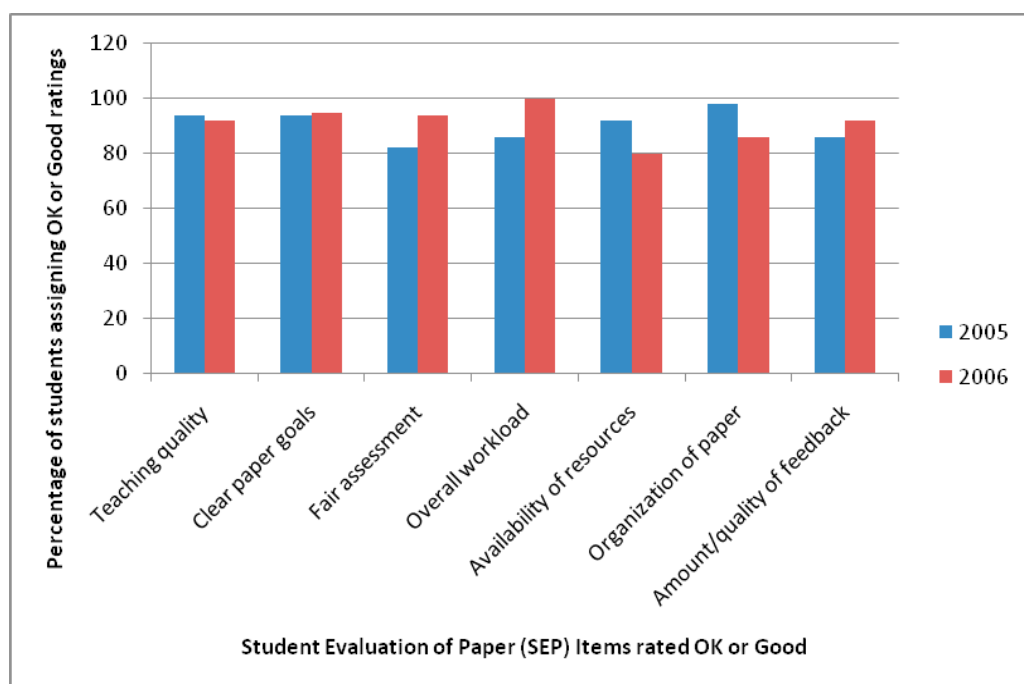


Figure 6: Student Evaluation of Paper (SEP) items rated OK or Good, 2005–2006



## Teaching appraisal by student feedback

This institutional questionnaire includes 13 standard rating items and two open-response questions (“What does this lecturer do well?” and “What suggestions do you have for improvement?”). A four-point scale is used for the rating items (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree). A *not applicable* response option is included. Collation of responses from this questionnaire is usually done by a trusted colleague, or a school administrator in some cases.

Chris sought feedback on his teaching from students on two occasions during 2006 Semester A (March and May). When the response categories *agree* and *strongly agree* are combined, the responses have a very positive bias (90–100 percent students selecting one of these categories) across all items for both appraisals

When responses for the *agree* and the *strongly agree* categories are compared, a pattern of improvement is apparent (March to May) for all but one item, with the greatest gains being made on items that are relevant to the TLEIs being implemented (i.e., helps me to take responsibility for my learning, +21 percent; gives constructive feedback about my progress, +22 percent; effectively uses his/her subject knowledge to guide my learning, +18 percent; clearly communicates assessment requirements, +12 percent) (see Figure 7).

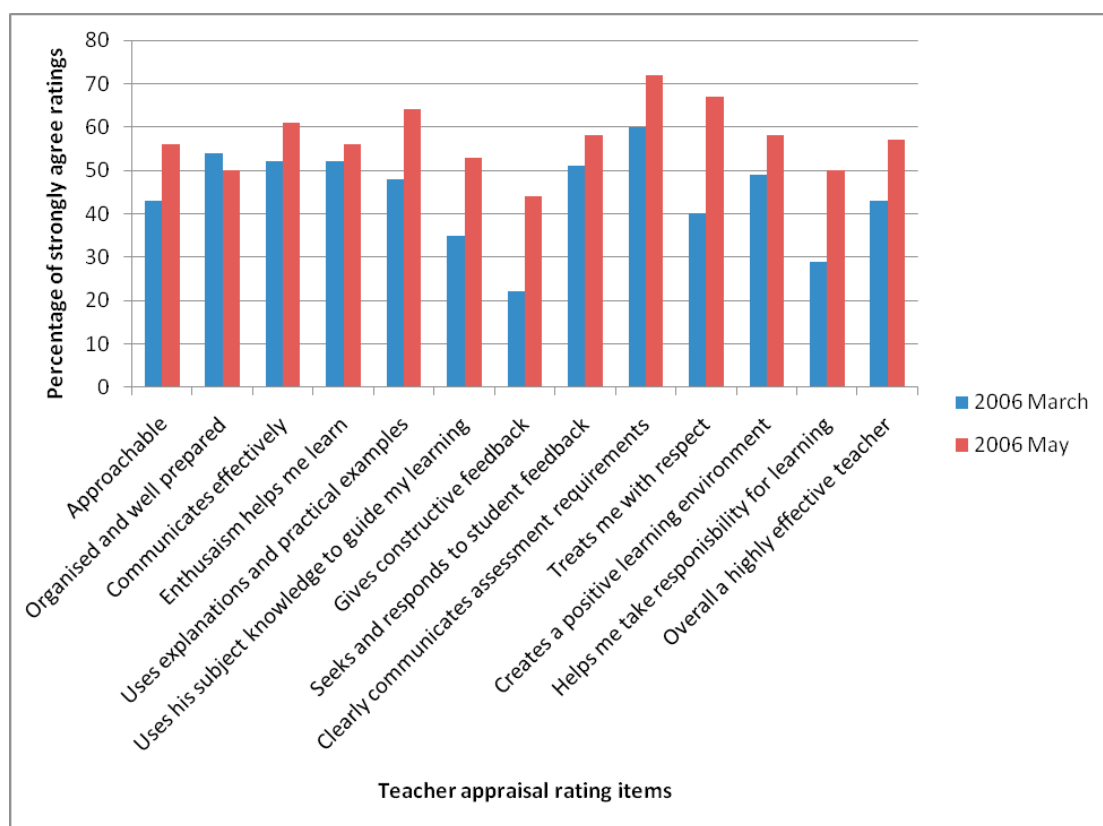


Figure 7: Percentage of strongly agree teacher appraisal ratings, March–May 2006

The qualitative responses again provide evidence of student awareness and endorsement of TLEIs. This was particularly apparent in relation to Chris’s clear communication of ideas and information, and various aspects of the assessments (types of assessment, concern to provide clear directions, constructive feedback, being helpful). In the May feedback there were 16 comments about aspects of his communication, six of which referred to the clear information he provided about assessment requirements.

Suggestions for improvement were again quite wide ranging, varied and sometimes inconsistent. One matter that surfaced and prompted further productive discussion between Chris and the academic developers concerned the level of support or help provided. A few students felt that this was more than was required or appropriate; for example: “A little bit too much help .... Not that it’s not helpful ... just maybe a little bit too much help.” This feedback generated reflection on appropriate forms and levels of scaffolding and the timing of moves to reduce support, as well as strategies for accommodating the diverse needs of a very heterogeneous group of students.

## Focus group responses

Towards the end of Semester B, 2006, interviews were held with students in four focus groups. Each group included three or four students who had volunteered to participate. They were a cross-section of students with respect to origin (domestic/international) and language background.

Most of the responses were similar to those obtained from the SEP and teacher appraisal surveys, and while some concerned Chris's personal attributes and orientation to teaching, many reflected student recognition of TLEIs that had been beneficial for their learning. For example, when students responded to the question "Think about the grades you have received on this paper. What factors have had most effect on these grades?", they most frequently identified factors associated with assessment (clear information about assessment tasks and requirements; very detailed guidance on the marking scheme, including what was required to achieve an A, B or C grade; help with proof-reading and revising assignments; constructive feedback). Aspects of the way Chris presented ideas and information was a consideration (going step by step and identifying the main points, illustrating using personal experiences and stories). Several students emphasised the helpfulness of these methods for international/EAL students. A few students also acknowledged personal factors, including their own effort, interest and concentration.

## Phase Two: 2007–2008

While Chris continued to modify and fine-tune a range of aspects of the paper and his teaching during 2007–2008, the main focus of the TLEIs Amanda contributed to during this period focused on language matters. The backdrop to this collaborative work were language-related concerns that began to be addressed during 2006, in part as a response to the high proportion of EAL students. During 2006 a language needs analysis survey was conducted to provide better data on students' current language status and needs. Some work was done on the development of a glossary of terms associated with the hospitality business, and deliberate attention was paid to these terms during lectures. Also, a closer relationship was established with staff teaching an English for Academic Purposes paper, which some students were enrolled in concurrently (this included providing the teachers in that paper with materials relevant to hospitality). Criteria for selecting a textbook and other reading materials were discussed.

The issue of criteria re-emerged during 2007 when Chris selected an article written by the author of a text he had previously rejected, in part because of the reading demands of the text. Initially surprised by Chris's choice, Amanda proposed they use a "vocabulary profiler" tool to assess the frequency of particular categories of vocabulary in the article—a further selection criterion. This article was screened along with a non-academic article from a hospitality industry publication. The data obtained indicated that the level of academic text in the former would be difficult for students, especially EAL students.

Also relevant to the TLEIs during this period was a shift in the profile of the students in terms of their language background. It flipped from approximately 80 percent EAL (2006) to 20 percent EAL in the first semester of 2007, which prompted further investigation of aspects of language in a "linguistically diverse" classroom and associated support for students. In addition to implementing the vocabulary profiler to screen all print materials for students, the language needs analysis questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the semester, the teacher's feedback on the assigned text and other reading materials was obtained, and a questionnaire on the same reading materials was completed by students. The profile results, along with responses for the other instruments, was a catalyst for intensive discussion about aspects of the reading materials, and during 2007–2008 Chris and Amanda embarked on a systematic investigation of reading materials (textbooks, journal articles, non-academic publications) that might be used in the paper, with a focus on vocabulary.

Those investigations have drawn on student data to ensure that student perspectives are taken into account when considering selection criteria, and to assess students' response to selected materials. As a result of this work guides were prepared for EAL students to enable them to work more efficiently with written text and thereby offer a solution to the fluctuating linguistic diversity in the class. This work has also resulted in several presentations and publications (Kirkness, Neill and Naidoo, 2007; Kirkness and Neill, 2008; Kirkness, Neill and Gossman, 2008); Kirkness et. Al (2008); Kirkness and Neill (2009).

## Student learning: A comparison between 2006 and 2008

During this 3-year period a considerable number of TLEs were implemented. Some of the 2006 initiatives remained in place, albeit with some fine-tuning. For example, steps taken to provide explicit scaffolding for students were maintained (e.g., providing a clear overview of the paper content and outcomes, the use of in-class presentation strategy, and the ABC briefing for assessment tasks). However, assessment tasks were changed.

The initial improvement in students' performance (in terms of successful completion and grades achieved) apparent in 2006 was maintained during 2007 and 2008 (see Figure 8 and Figure 9). Similarly, the feedback—including qualitative feedback available from the SEPs and teaching appraisal questionnaires, repeated focus group interviews and reading survey questionnaires—also indicates considerable stability from 2006 to 2008 in the features that students identified as supporting their learning (see Figure 10 and Figure 11).

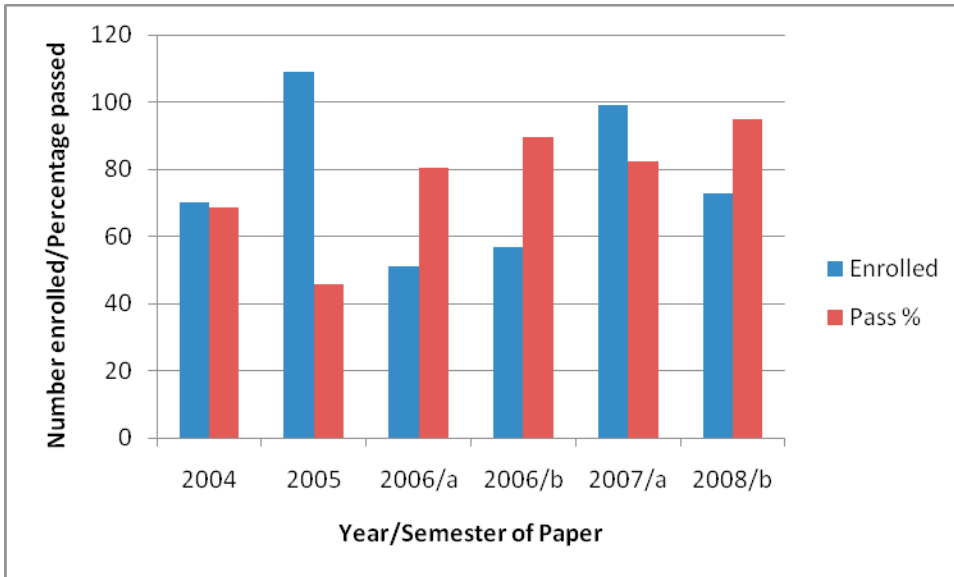


Figure 8: Figure 2: Number of students enrolled and the percentage who passed in Paper 21580 during 2004 – 2008

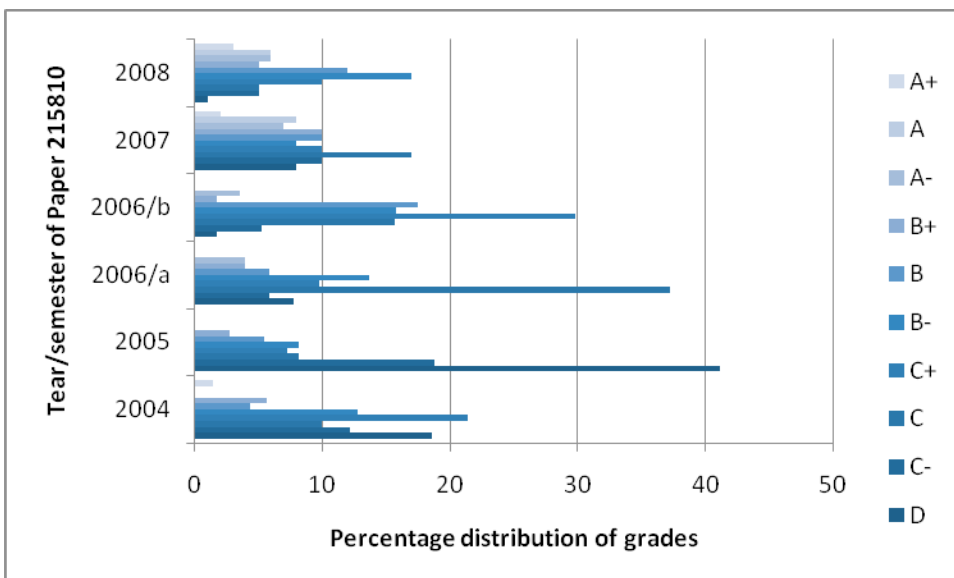


Figure 9: Percentage distribution of grades in Paper 215810 during 2006–2008

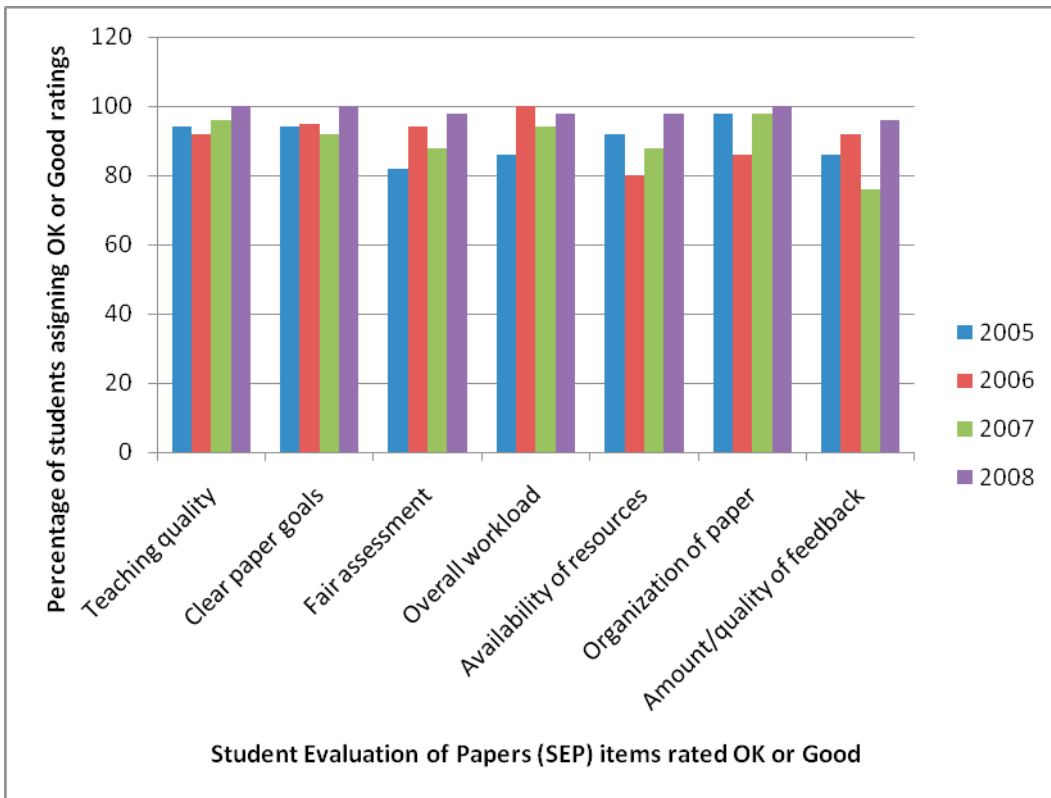


Figure 10: Student Evaluation of Paper (SEP) items rated OK and Good

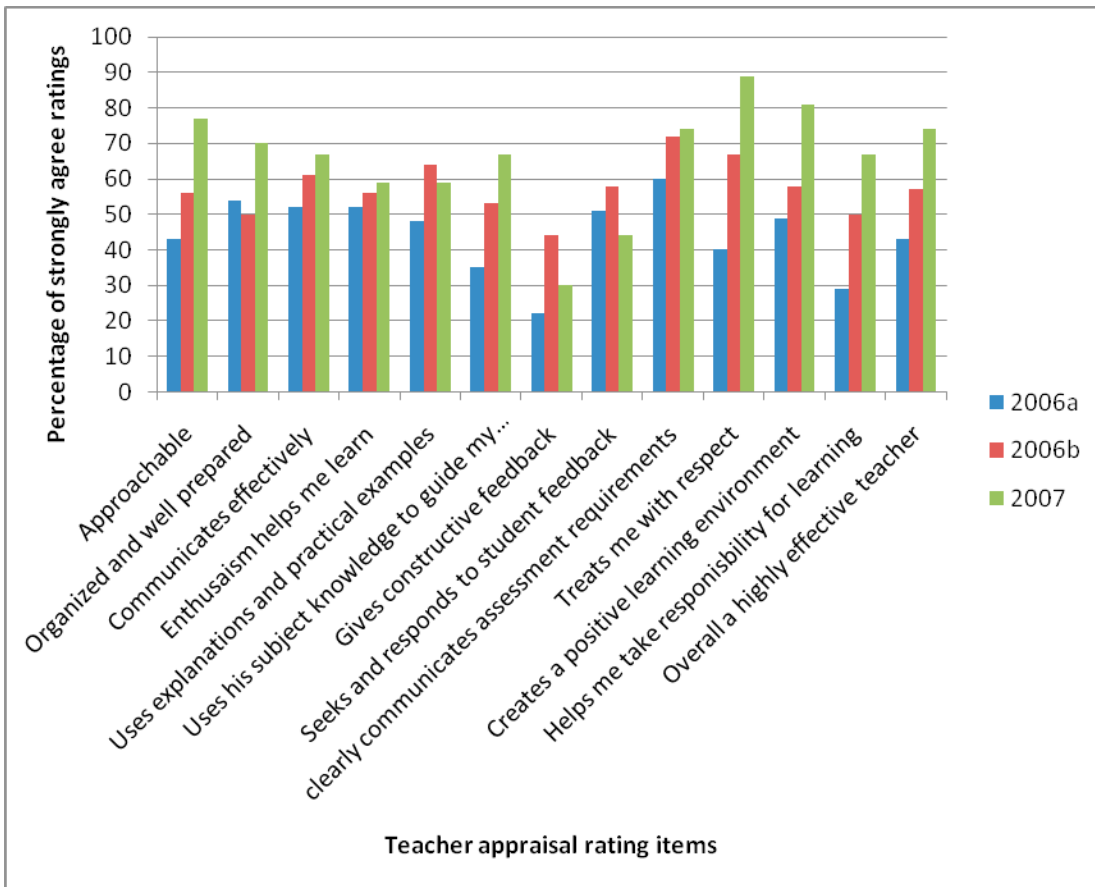


Figure 11: Percentage of Strongly Agree teacher appraisal ratings, 2006–2007

The following are representative of frequently stated views made by the 2008 cohort, which echo those of the 2006 students concerning features such as clarity of presentation, detailed guidelines for assessments, and an overview of the field of hospitality, which can assist in the selection of majors.

He explains words that could potentially confuse students and sometimes gives an example of the word that has the same meaning but easier.

He tried to make sure everyone understood before moving on.

Content supported with real life examples make it easy to understand.

What was required was explained thoroughly so that it was understood.

He gave us 'A' list<sup>6</sup>, very good instruction (how to do the assignment).

The 'A lists' which he gave us helps us to understand more about the paper and study more efficiently.

Lecturer made outlines for assessments very clear and gave good examples. Good start and introduction to work in all areas of hospitality.

The content which this paper covered, e.g. a brief outline of each major, which would give me some direction for choosing what I like and to know about what might be taught in that major.

Overall, these data provide evidence that the academic developers' influence on TLEIs has had a lingering, positive influence on students' learning.

## Other findings and outcomes

The project has had a number of beneficial outcomes beyond those immediately associated with the primary research questions.

### Insights into academic development practice

For the academic developers, participation in the project led to greater awareness of, and reflection on, day-to-day practices that may have become tacit and taken for granted. Reflection reaffirmed the appropriateness and effectiveness of some practices and prompted more thoughtful and deliberate use of them. It also prompted them to conceive and try out new approaches. For a summary of our insights, see Appendix 2.

### Understanding the teacher's work environment

We have been reminded throughout the project that the outcomes of our collaborative work can be contingent on a range of factors that are beyond the teacher and outside their control. With this in mind, we documented helps and hindrances that Chris experienced in relation to involving his colleagues in developing, gaining approval for and implementing TLEIs. For example, obtaining approval for desired changes to the paper's learning outcomes was difficult and time-consuming. As this instance confirmed, other staff in the teacher's workgroup, department or faculty may be interested, supportive, keen to participate, uninterested, dismissive, antagonistic or obstructive. The overall culture in the teacher's environment may account for these individual responses and determine how much "elbow room" teachers and academic developers actually have when contemplating change (Trowler and Bamber, 2005, p. 87). While acknowledging these realities, we also endeavoured to identify ways in which we might assist Chris to overcome or circumvent such obstacles.

### Engendering and building on ripple effects

Although the project has reinforced our view that this can be an optimal way of working with/for our colleagues, as previously noted there are issues relating to time and cost effectiveness. Often, however, there can be positive ripple effects that compensate for the overheads (e.g., the teacher passes on good ideas, other

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<sup>6</sup> Chris provided students with a list of criteria that would need to be fulfilled to achieve particular grades. Students referred to this list as the 'A' list.

staff become aware and seek similar support). Although there were obstacles to overcome, we discerned a number of significant ripple effects at different levels: across Chris's papers, within Chris's School, within the University and beyond the University. These ripple effects are summarized in Appendix 3.

The project has confirmed that although engendering these effects may take time and perseverance, the dividends can be significant. In the first year of the project such effects were limited, despite deliberate attempts to foster them. However, during 2007/08 they occurred with increasing momentum. This reflects our appreciation of the need to acquire a good understanding of the distinctive environment and culture within which Chris is immersed as we considered who might be responsive to a "ripple" and how particular ripples might be initiated and sustained. Overall, we recognise that we have become much more deliberate, strategic and planned in relation to achieving these effects (Haigh, 2011).

## Researching the academic developer–student learning relationship

We encountered significant conceptual and methodological challenges during the project. These have confirmed some of our views about the realities of teaching–learning relationships, provided new insights into those relationships and led to changes in our views about ways of researching them. Examples of these challenges and our response to them are summarised in Appendix 4.

Despite these challenges, the process of engaging with them has provided valuable and stimulating insights into aspects of our own practices as academic developers and teachers, as well as the everyday lives of the colleagues we work with (and for) and their students. They have also had a significant influence on our views about approaches to researching the relationships between academic development, teaching and student learning.

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# Appendix 1: A sample of data providing evidence of academic developer influence on teacher thoughts and actions

TLEI: Providing vocabulary development support, in particular for EAL students, and including developing a glossary

## a. Excerpts from meeting transcripts:

*Amanda:* ... one of the things that I heard you say talking about that old textbook which you aren't going to use, but ... obviously the students are finding things difficult ... is a glossary. Do you want someone like me to help compile a glossary? In other words, the difficult words and the easy definitions.

*Chris:* Yes, the answer is yes.

*Amanda:* I couldn't do that myself ... You would have to tell me the meanings of words and things like that. (21 December 2005)

## b. Excerpts from emails

Hi [David],

I'm having frequent informal telephone talks or encounters with Chris that defy any recording device. I thought I'd write this to keep a record of some recent developments.

We're working on glossaries. [Chris] has written his own for each lecture and sent them to me to check for clarity for EAL learners. I offered to look at the paper descriptor that is given to students, again with a view to clarifying language for EAL learners. (9 February 2006, Amanda to David)

## c. Chris's self-reports on actions

And the glossary. While that was a good idea in the beginning, I put too much emphasis on the business terms. And then when (names a colleague) took that stuff out that's sort of fallen, when I say it's fallen a wee bit, flat, I am having trouble showing relevancy of the glossary to the content now because it's changed a bit. But the glossary is still used and the glossary has been distributed to Kate on the Diploma programme. So it's going to have a wider ... So, it, it is a good idea. It is working. It's not working as well as I thought it would. Uhm, but nonetheless, it's better than before. And I think that will take fine-tuning. But it was a good idea. I really should, if there was more time, [have] concentrated on exactly what the content was. But when that changed at the last minute, it threw the glossary out. And, I just thought I will go with the glossary—and then in the practical applications, too much business stuff. (20 February 2006)

**d. Artefacts:** For example, Glossary of Terms.

## e. Chris's perceptions of the academic developers' influence

*Which initiatives involved some input from Brendan and Amanda?*

I think the whole load of change has had input from A and B. Certainly the multichoice had input from Brendan (thank God), and some of the extra stuff like learning outcomes etc ...and this was incredibly valuable for me (knowledge shortfall), even though some changes didn't make it past ER. The language stuff with Amanda was a reinforcement of my initial gut feel about text, but was key in reinforcing the belief that change was needed and that the changes that occurred were congruent to student need. I don't think any change has not had Amanda and Brendan's input either before during or after ...but best check with them too.

## Appendix 2: Insights into academic development practice

- We have identified many ways in which academic development has been enacted during the project:
  - indicating that there is experiential and/or research support for views
  - describing additional options for responding to situations and concerns
  - teaching about particular methods (e.g., multi-choice tests)
  - facilitating thinking about matters (e.g., learning outcomes)
  - suggesting and assisting with additional data gathering/inquiries
  - identifying measures/tools that could be used to provide better data to base decisions on
  - processing, and assisting with the interpretation of, data that has been collected (e.g., student feedback).

This has been helpful for occasions when we describe the nature of our work to colleagues.

- We have identified the benefits and challenges of collaborative vs solo academic development work.
- While we were aware that there needed to be strategic engagement with the leaders in the School, the points at which this happened were not planned formally. On reflection, having close liaison with those leaders within the School at more frequent intervals during the project could have enhanced the progression of the intervention, and led to earlier awareness of the benefits that were eventually to become ripple effects.
- The fact that the project was an externally funded research project gave the academic developers a mandate to work closely with the teacher over a longer period of time than would normally occur, and the interventions undertaken were regarded as having greater legitimacy and value as researched activities.
- The project has reconfirmed the effectiveness of working at the point of need (vs generic workshops). Also, the importance/value of establishing relationships—in this case with the luxury of them being long-term.
- This form of academic development work can keep an academic developer grounded with respect to awareness of the everyday realities of fellow academics' work lives.
- Our experiences reinforced the view that academic development has to be context embedded, perhaps especially in language-related areas. When embedded, it does become co-production.
- This form of academic development involves an ongoing decision-making process, where the AD decides which point to focus on now and which issues to hold back on. That process is easier when the work extends over a period of time.
- The teacher's spontaneous and solicited feedback on the influence of the academic developers gave us helpful insights into how our day-to-day work, over time, can be experienced and evaluated. This mode of academic development provides more and better opportunities for obtaining evidence of the influence of particular academic development activities. The nature of formal and informal feedback that academic developers draw on does not usually provide this rich information.
- The research component of the project (e.g., focus groups) provided us with opportunities to get first-hand and frank accounts from students of their learning experiences. The project brought us nearer to the everyday worlds of students than is often possible.
- Our extended work with Chris was shaped by, and realised in, an agenda that involved helping Chris move from excellent teacher to scholarly teacher to scholar of teaching.
- Although this form of academic development may be optimal, the level of input that needs to occur initially cannot be sustained indefinitely. To help ensure sustainability, teachers need to be helped to become scholarly and scholars so that they have the capacity to address their emergent questions themselves or with other colleagues. Initiatives also need to "owned" by the teacher and department without the requirement for ongoing involvement of academic developers. A weaning process may be required to achieve this.



# Appendix 3: Ripple effects

## Across Chris's teaching programme

In addition to Chris's involvement in the project prompting a general change in his orientation to teaching (from excellent teacher to scholar of teaching, more concern with the students' perspective on learning, a commitment to "stop and think – what am I doing as the person leading this group of learners?"), a number of the TLEIs designed for this paper were subsequently adopted in other papers that Chris taught, along with other new strategies arising from involvement in the project.

- Scaffolding strategies are used in all papers now
- Learning outcomes are explicitly prioritized (A, B and C priority)
- Students entering Year One papers complete a Vocabulary levels test and end-on support is provided for students requiring language development
- There is much greater checking back with students on how they are faring
- There is a reduced concern to "get the content done", which has created a more collaborative relationship with students
- Feedback on teaching is obtained early in the paper so that the paper can be modified if appropriate. Feedback and decisions are shared with students.

## Within Chris's school

- There is awareness that there needs to be closer, reciprocal relationships with staff in other faculties who provide service papers for the School (e.g., in Academic English), to ensure they are appropriately tailored for the Schools' students (e.g., relevant reading materials in Hospitality). Issues relating to internal competition, lines of responsibility and communication have posed challenges for achieving this effect.
- There is wider acknowledgement among colleagues of linguistically at-risk students, and new identification and follow-up support strategies are now being implemented. The Vocabulary Levels Test is now used as a component of a screening process for all students coming in to the programme so that they can be streamed into an appropriate language service paper in the first year.
- More consideration is given to content synergy, and programme coherence is becoming apparent (e.g., comparison of content and learning outcomes across strands of papers). This change is reflected in a review of the programme graduate attribute profile.
- There is a higher level of contact and interaction between School staff and academic developers.
- There is more evidence of valuing research as a foundation for decisions about learning and teaching matters. A major research project has been initiated to investigate student, teacher and industry mentor views about a graduate attribute profile.

## Within the University

- There is greater awareness of tools for identifying the language status of students and the vocabulary demands of reading materials (e.g. some staff in other faculties are using the Vocab Profiler). This awareness has informed a recent institutional decision to adopt a Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) questionnaire<sup>7</sup> which is designed to assess beginning undergraduate students' readiness for study at an English-medium university and to identify any related language development needs.
- More staff are aware of the potential benefits such intensive and sustained work with academic developers. We are also able to offer more rigorous and compelling evidence of those benefits.
- A project is underway to investigate progression in language demands across a set of stair-cased foundation papers across several Schools.

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7 For information about DELNA see <http://www.delna.auckland.ac.nz/uoal/>

## Beyond the University

A number of presentations, conference papers and articles have been prepared and lead to dialogue with colleagues in other institutions.

Some of the insights from this project are being drawn on in other projects that team members are involved in. Amanda is involved in a Tertiary Education Commission-funded project, Learning for Living, which aims to raise awareness of how to embed the teaching of academic literacies in discipline teaching. David is contributing to a Ministry of Education-funded Teaching Matters Forum project, which focuses on strategies for encouraging and supporting tertiary teachers' engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning.



# Appendix 4: Research challenges and responses

1. There may be longstanding influences on teacher decision making that will not be immediately apparent. Some time may also elapse before a potential influence (e.g., a suggestion) becomes an actual influence (a suggestion that is accepted and adopted). Identifying and understanding these circumstances requires a life-history approach to data gathering.
2. Although we can go some way towards differentiating influences weighting their respective impact remains difficult, if not impossible.
3. Some TLEIs that are potential influences on student learning are interrelated given their shared purposes. For example, explicit moves to provide more scaffolding can have language support elements. They may then have a combined impact.
4. Some TLEIs (e.g., revised learning outcomes) are intended to enhance the worth of students' learning, which is not reflected in specific achievement gains. It is more difficult to identify appropriate indices for these qualitative dimensions of learning.
5. We have had to accept the incompleteness of our data. Overall, the student data are more limited than would have been ideal because we were very conscious of the need to avoid overloading students, and our capacity to both gather and process data was constrained by our own workloads.
6. We have had to seek post-event interpretations as we compiled the overall narrative, but can we assume that they represent the original meanings attached to particular situations or events? Or have they been filtered and modified through the impact of intervening events and the passage of time? We have maintained verbatim records (emails and transcripts of meetings) to reduce forgetting and distortion.
7. Simply handling the extensive data set has been challenging. In the end, a significant portion may have been irrelevant to questions we sought to answer, but this could not be known, for sure, in advance. We continue to discover the significance of data as they are revisited and different questions are posed.
8. The development of analytic frameworks (e.g., see Figures 1 and 5) has been critical. To some extent, we have necessarily adopted a grounded theory approach as we have modified the frameworks/models that we started with.
9. The parameters of the project have grown as we have recognised the interconnectedness of phenomena. For example, as we helped Chris grapple with obstacles within his immediate work environment (e.g., colleagues' resistance to some proposed changes), we also saw the potential for positive ripple effects emerging out of the TLEIs (e.g., other colleagues becoming aware of and adopting some practices). This was clearly an important issue to consider, as we were conscious of the need to consider the time vs cost-effectiveness of this intensive form of academic development. If such ripple effects can be engendered, the effectiveness can be greatly enhanced.

## Lead researchers and authors



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