

Title: Integrating the scholarship of teaching, learning and assessment into one institution's homegrown professional learning resources

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Abstract

Many professional learning (PL) programs in universities aspire to support tertiary educators to perform duties associated with teaching, student learning and assessment. Additionally, because much of a university academic's work is associated with conducting scholarly research and supervising students' research, PL programs also need to provide support associated with supervision and research activities. Faced with these multiple PL demands, one small Australian higher education institution developed a suite of resources to support faculty teaching staff and researchers in their professional capacities using a heuristic (self-determined) approach to resource development. The content of the resources drew on the principles of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and a participatory research methodology was adopted to develop the resources. This paper outlines almost a decade of scholarly work that has resulted in the construction of a collection of PL resources which have been developed to improve the quality of the institution's SoTL and research.

Keywords

professional learning; professional development; faculty development; scholarship of teaching and learning; institutional approach; utilisation-focused evaluation

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide an account of a suite of homegrown professional learning (PL) resources that were created at one small higher education institution in Australia across almost one decade within the organisational structures of a number of funded research projects. These resources were designed to support researcher education, postgraduate supervision and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), especially in the areas of online teaching and authentic learning. This collection of PL resources has been developed for the purposes of improving the quality of the institution's SoTL and research. The theoretical framework is also described, including the pedagogical principles on which the resources were built and the research methodology adopted to develop these resources. The paper does not report on the evaluation of the use and impact of these resources but the outcomes of such evaluations have been reported elsewhere (for example, Boddey & Northcote, 2015; Northcote & Williams, 2014; Northcote, Williams, Carton, Petrie, & Lemke, 2017, in press; Petrie, Anderson, de Waal, et al., 2016).

Theoretical framework

SoTL, especially the type of scholarship espoused by Trigwell (2013) and Boyer (1990), provided the foundational core on which the PL resources outlined in this paper were designed. The SoTL commonly refers to the practice of inquiring about teaching and learning, and then sharing and publicizing the findings of such inquiries to enhance the quality of teaching and, consequently, the quality of the students' learning experiences. Specifically, the nature and content of the resources outlined in this paper are intended to support high quality teaching, learning, research and assessment, and inquiry into these areas at the institution, in ways that promote sharing of knowledge and public scrutiny of the resources. Trigwell (2013) suggests teaching and learning become more scholarly "when teaching is seen as scholarly and inquiring and when it is made public and peer reviewed" (p. 95), reminding us that the whole purpose of the SoTL is "to enhance students' experience of learning" (p. 95). Trigwell's (2013) suggestions along with Boyer's (1990) definition of the SoTL as being a systematic inquiry of teaching and learning that is shared and open to public scrutiny and evaluation, all align well to the current focus of Avondale College of Higher Education. The institution is currently harnessing its resources to build a research-intensive institution that augments a strong scholarly culture in which teaching and learning are highly valued by all stakeholders of the institution. For a higher education institution that is on track to becoming a university, the SoTL approach provides a strong theoretical foundation to guide the advancement of scholarly teaching and learning, and goes hand-in-hand with SoTL-informed research practices. The SoTL pedagogical principles underlying the content of the resources were complemented by a participatory research methodology that was adopted to develop the resources. This methodological approach is outlined below.

Research methodology

The resources outlined in this paper were devised and created by adopting participatory forms of research and evaluation methodologies. These methodological approaches were characterized by involving as many stakeholders as possible in the design, development and evaluation of the resources. The primary form of research methodology used to develop these resources was a utilisation-focused evaluation research methodology (Patton, 2012, 2015), an approach that is particularly helpful in engaging stakeholders and resource-users in the process of developing educational resources. Through mixed methods research approaches, data were gathered by conducting focus groups, questionnaires and interviews with undergraduate and postgraduate students, faculty members, postgraduate supervisors and administration staff. For some resources, panels of experts were also consulted to gather specialist advice about the nature, content and presentation of the resources. Data collected from these various sources were compared, analysed and triangulated to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings identified during the development of each resource (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Further comparative analysis with relevant literature was conducted to ensure the resources were aligned with current best practice in the field of PL and higher education.

The use of Patton's (2012, 2015) utilisation-focused evaluation research approach ensured that processes adopted to design, develop and evaluate the resources were evidence-based, being informed by locally gathered research data. In each case, these processes were actively researched and data were gathered in an ongoing way to inform the continual appraisal of these resources. This ensured that the resources themselves were characterized by the SoTL (Boyer, 1990; Kreber & Kanuka, 2013; Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin, & Prosser, 2015). Because many of the resources were intended to reach faculty members across disciplines and to present knowledge that was applicable in nature, they represent examples of the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of teaching and

the scholarship of application, as described by Boyer (1990). Each of the resources outlined in this paper undergo regular evaluation. Although this is not the focus of this paper, the outcomes of the resource evaluations have been reported elsewhere.

Results: Homegrown professional learning resources

Over the past eight years, scholars, researchers, administrators and educators at Avondale have worked together to design and develop a range of scholarly PL resources. The funding and support for these projects has mainly been provided through external funding from competitive grants provided by the Office for Learning and Teaching in Australia. These external grants were supplemented by in-house funding and in-kind support. Each resource is now described.

The Researcher's Little Helper

The development of the *Researcher's Little Helper* has provided a central online repository that both students and staff can access to support their research endeavours. Housed within Moodle, the Learning Management System (LMS) used by the institution, the structure of this resource is organized into topics that cover the key skills that are central to successful academic research, including: selecting a research topic; writing a literature review; methodological approaches; and ethical considerations. These topics are specific to the needs of higher degree research students as they plan and complete their thesis/ dissertation, including: advice about developing a research proposal; tips for writing a thesis/ dissertation; examples of completed theses/dissertations; and links to relevant the institution's policies. In addition to providing support for the development of core research skills, the site provides links to resources that assist in embedding a researcher into a sustainable and active research community such as sites that promote collaboration with other researchers, as well as sites that provide advice about reporting research and securing research funding. For those faculty members who wish to develop further skills in the supervision of higher degree research students, a link within the site provides access to the newly developed *Research Training Support Framework*, outlined in the following section of this paper.

[add Figure 1 and Figure 1 caption here – see end of this document]

Research Training Support Framework

The *Research Training Support Framework* was developed to encourage and empower current and potential supervisors of higher degree research students (Petrie, Anderson, Carton, et al., 2016). The development of the Framework was funded by an Extension Grant from the Office for Learning and Teaching in Australia. The Framework was developed in collaboration with a number of national and international experts (Petrie et al., 2015). Initiated in response to identified needs of both staff and students, it is based on the premise that developing a pedagogy of supervision (Nulty, Kiley, & Meyer, 2009) is central to supporting an active institutional research culture. The Framework provides advice for each step of a typical HDR student's progression through their degree, beginning with admission into an HDR program, the selection of a supervisor and the subsequent confirmation process that is required in many HDR programs in Australian universities. The Framework focuses on skills specific to guiding a student in managing their research project, the development of appropriate writing skills and the process of publishing and presenting research findings. A number of brief fact-sheets are included in each of the Framework's stages, providing advice within areas such as the supervision of part-time students, working effectively with distance students and cross-cultural considerations. Each area of the Framework provides links to other Avondale webpages

(e.g., policies) that guide students' progression through their postgraduate degree and set institutional expectations for their postgraduate supervisors.

[add Figure 2 and Figure 2 caption here – see end of this document]

Moodle's Little Helper

Moodle's Little Helper was initiated in 2012 and developed to assist academic staff with their online teaching and course design. Moodle is the LMS platform used at this institution and so the plain and coherent name of this tool was chosen to easily identify it when needed by staff. This self-help PL resource provides accessible and flexible instructions and resources in an online context to assist faculty members in 12 identified areas related to online teaching and online course design (Northcote & Boddey, 2014), namely: setting up courses; structuring a course; uploading materials; promoting learner interactivity; assessment portals; media enhancements; examples of best practice; quality of online courses; contacting and monitoring students; Turnitin; literature about online learning; and PL workshops. The resource is designed in a way that enables faculty members to instantly access the area in which they require help. Quick access is enabled through a hyperlinked menu to video tutorials, text-based instructional resources, best practice showcases, course exemplars and workshop materials (Northcote & Boddey, 2014). Staff access this online resource tool regularly and independently for guidance and help as required. This resource is regularly monitored and updated for ongoing faculty PL, and teaching and course design developments.

[add Figure 3 and Figure 3 caption here – see end of this document]

Assessment @ Avondale

Many universities, both in Australia and internationally, have put much effort into providing cutting-edge resources for assessment (Cox, Bradford, & Miller, 2016; Dawson, 2015; The Higher Education Academy, 2012). In response to this trend Avondale created an assessment website. The *Assessment@Avondale* (A@A) website has been funded by internal in-kind support from the Office of Academic and Research of Avondale. The website aims to offer a collection of high quality resources for faculty members to use in their consideration of best practice in the design and use of assessment tasks in their courses. A@A is a portal that provides a collection of assessment resources which are mainly pre-existing resources from other universities and higher education sources. The audience are intended to be those involved in teaching and assessing higher education students at Avondale. As the resource develops in the future it will expand its audience by offering information to help students make the most of their assessment tasks, grades and the various forms of feedback lecturers offer them.

The A@A website elucidates the important areas of good assessment alongside references to the relevant institutional policies affecting assessment at Avondale. It is comprised of sections covering principles and standards (Boud & Associates, 2010; Shapland, 2011); assessment construction and processes (Biggs, 2014; Kandlbinder, 2014); a large collection of examples and types of assessment; student understanding and reflection tips; and PL and research resources. The website supports those involved in learning, teaching and assessment, with easy access to information across the multi-faceted nature of the modern approach to assessment taken at Avondale.

[add Figure 4 and Figure 4 caption here – see end of this document]

Transformational Assessment Toolbox

The *Transformational Assessment Toolbox* is a collection of Avondale resources and outcomes funded by a Seed Grant from the Office for Learning and Teaching in Australia, and accessed via a tab on the Assessment@Avondale website, presented in the section above. The resource aims to encourage and provide assistance for course designers and lecturers to rethink and plan their assessment feedback process within the higher education sector. This toolbox has four sections. The first section provides the background information on this resource. The second section provides videos and reports of three case studies that used adaptively released assessment feedback (ARAF) strategies in the tertiary education sector. The third section provides direction for the practice and implementation of ARAF strategies through the use of questions, and implementation of staged practical guidelines for pre-semester and during semester practice as well as recommendations on the timing of these. This section also includes suggestions for future research directions in assessment. The fourth and final section of this resource provides detailed information on the research project that initiated this toolbox as well as publications, key readings and other relevant references for ARAF.

[add Figure 5 and Figure 5 caption here – see end of this document]

Threshold Concepts for Novice Online Teachers

The *Threshold Concepts for Novice Online Teachers* resource was developed as one of the key products of a research project, funded by a Seed Grant from the Office for Learning and Teaching in Australia, that aimed to identify the threshold concepts that novice online teachers require to teach effectively in online courses. The resource consists of a collection of threshold concepts about online teaching with an explanation of the features of these threshold concepts. For example, two of the threshold concepts noted on the website include “Online course design is critical to the success of online teaching and learning” and “Students can learn without the teacher being present”. These threshold concepts represent some key focus points of learning for novice online teachers. Also, practical curriculum design guidelines are provided; these guidelines are intended for use when developing curricula for transformative PL of novice online educators in higher education contexts. In addition to the list of threshold concepts and PL curriculum guidelines, the online resource provides: 1) a summary of the students’ and teachers’ perceptions of online learning environments; 2) references and links to online resources about threshold concepts; and 3) details of the scholarly publications and presentations that were produced to disseminate the project’s findings. Overall, the main intention of this online resource was to provide research-informed guidance for how to design PL programs, activities and resources for novice online teachers in higher education contexts.

[add Figure 6 and Figure 6 caption here – see end of this document]

Tutor’s Den – Supporting Academic Assistance to Students

The *Tutor’s Den* database has been developed to help those who run a student assistance and academic support centre with a purpose-driven, digitized and online application. As Avondale already employs the Moodle LMS, its internal database was considered the most appropriate platform to securely keep the data used to provide tutoring services to students. The database supports the documentation of a cycle of assistance provided to students by the tutors at Avondale. The cycle begins with students interacting with lecturers and teachers. When either the students or the lecturer identifies there may be some benefit to be gained through utilizing Avondale’s tutoring service, the student can be referred to the service. Tutors work with a student to scaffold the

development of their core academic and scholastic skills, increasing their confidence in their capacity to be successful in their degrees.

The various information and reports being generated between students, their teachers and the tutors can be kept securely in an accessible online place. Secondly, this solution allows the tutoring team to work in collaborative and streamlined ways to support their student clients. Any tutor assisting a student can access records for the individual student case. With up-to-date records, the tutors can respond with interventional learning activities that are most constructive to the individual learner's needs in their current academic circumstances. Utilizing a simple database saves much time and has a positive organising effect on many of the tutor's tasks.

MOOBRIC

The MOOBRIC (Northcote, Seddon, & Brown, 2011) is part of an institutional response to the needs of Avondale's faculty members who requested advice about recognising the characteristics of a well designed online education program and how to teach at a high quality in online courses. The MOOBRIC uses a self-reflective approach that supports the PL of faculty members with varying degrees of online teaching experience and expertise, from beginning through to advanced stages. Based on the three areas of content, technology and pedagogy, descriptive statements are offered to enable faculty members to identify their own existing skill levels of effective online teaching and course design. Furthermore, the MOOBRIC provides guidance about how to make online courses more engaging for students. The online version of the MOOBRIC (<http://www.moobric.net>) is interactive and allows users to expand the issues that are of current interest to them and to leave the other areas collapsed, allowing the other elements to remain hidden until required. The MOOBRIC can be used as a thought-provoking starting point which may be altered to suit personal needs.

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Scholarly significance

From the resources outlined above, it is clear that a higher education institution, such as Avondale, is advised to invest in the PL of staff in order to raise the profile of scholarship. One of the challenges however within smaller institutions is that often the resources required for high-quality PL programs are lacking (Allen & Kelly, 2015). While isolated pockets of innovation may occur among the institution's faculty, such initiatives are not always sufficiently resourced as part of an institutional strategic plan. Often there is little funding devoted to the enhancement of the activity of scholarship itself, or activities that constitute the foundations of scholarship such as those associated with teacher development, course enhancement or teaching innovation.

An important part of SoTL is sharing teaching and learning experiences as well as sharing the developed initiative (in this case, a suite of PL resources). Traditionally this was only done in conferences. Institutions need to further develop forums for such activities and build them into their calendar to ensure they become regular components of the institution's calendar of events. The scholars themselves are responsible for sharing such work with peers and colleagues, both within and outside their institution. It is important for a small institution to develop its faculty members' capacity to engage in the activity of communicating their scholarly activities as well as imparting training (Petrie et al., 2015).

The activity of sharing, as a scholarly activity, is also valuable to other small institutions. As an Adventist institution, Avondale has many sister institutions, especially those in developing countries. There is the potential, especially through such mediums as communicating through video

conferencing and accessing online scholarly resources, to involve and engage staff at these institutions in our scholarly sharing times. The Christian education community, which is extensive in Australia, also provides additional sharing opportunities. These communities can be invited to share and contribute to our institutional scholarly activities as well as sharing and using the resources developed as part of that scholarship.

Conclusion

When developing its PL resources, Avondale has been mindful not to fall into the one-size-fits-all trap. Instead, it has been strategic in developing its resources and PL around the themes of diversity. The temptation to make all resources and training narrow for ease has been avoided and the focus of the scholarly and development activities has been directed towards capacity building; enabling staff to take ownership of their own PL and scholarly activities. Avondale offers a diverse range of courses for its size and there are specific disciplinary cultures which exist within the institution. Importantly, not all staff are at the same point in their PL. By developing these resources there have been a number of benefits for Avondale as an institution, including: ongoing individual self-directed support for existing and new staff; a supportive teaching and learning climate; and, a positive change in the culture of innovation and scholarship. Intrinsic to the initiatives presented in this paper is the attribute of ensuring the PL resources are as flexible as possible so as not to exclude staff based on where they are at in their PL journeys. Our desire has always been to enable, empower and support, rather than to develop uniformity. To sustain this attitude and to sustain the diversity of activities in an institution looking both to enhance its teaching and learning practice, but also its research capacity, scholarly resources must be tailored in ways to support these initiatives.

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For Avondale Researchers

The Researcher's Little Helper

Aim of this site: To support Avondale staff and students to conduct and supervise postgraduate research.

Click on a link below to see a topic or select 'Show All' to scroll down and browse.

- Overview
- Researcher skills
- Proposal
- Lit Review
- Setup
- Ethics
- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Creative practice
- Tools
- Collaborate
- Thesis
- Supervision
- Reporting
- Grants
- Show All

Figure 1: The Researcher's Little Helper homepage, available at: <https://moodle.avondale.edu.au/login/index.php> (accessible by Avondale staff)



RESEARCH TRAINING SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

Figure 2: Research Training Support Framework, available at:
<http://www.avondale.edu.au/research-training>



moodle's little helper
Banner: by T Milojkovic

 **Aim of this site:** To assist staff in their use of Moodle at Avondale College of Higher Education.

Click on a link below to see a topic or select 'Show All' to scroll down and browse.

1) Setting Up 2) Uploading 3) Structuring 4) Interactivity 5) Assessment 6) Media

7) Examples 8) Quality 9) Contact 10) Turnitin 11) Reading 12) Workshops /PD All

Figure 3: Moodle's Little Helper homepage, available at:
<http://moodle.avondale.edu.au/course/view.php?id=1317> (accessible by Avondale staff)

Avondale
COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

ASSESSMENT@AVONDALE

Assessment home | Back | Avondale site | **Assessment**

Welcome to **Assessment@Avondale** - *Everything here is about assessment*

- PRINCIPLES & STANDARDS**
Ideas about assessment
- CONSTRUCTION**
Processes of assessment
- EXAMPLES & TYPES**
Different types of assessment
- STUDENT UNDERSTANDING & REFLECTION**
Metacognitive assessment skills
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & RESEARCH RESOURCES**
Learning more about assessment
- TRANSFORMATIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOLBOX**
Toolboxes

Figure 4: Assessment @ Avondale, available at:
<http://assessment.avondale.edu.au>

Avondale

TRANSFORMATIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOLBOX

Assessment @ Avondale Home | [This Toolbox Home](#) | [Back](#) | [HOME](#)

About This Toolbox

This toolbox includes resources and outcomes that were produced from an Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) Seed Grant during 2014-2016, titled: But when do I get my mark? Students' responsiveness to adaptively released assessment feedback. The contents of this toolbox have been designed especially for use within the higher education sector and may be of particular interest to course designers and lecturers who are interested in rethinking traditional processes of providing assessment feedback to their students with the intention of engaging students in reflection about their own learning by transforming some elements of the assessment process.

Adaptively-released assessment feedback (ARAF) strategies are sequenced or staged methods of providing multiple types of feedback (e.g., quantitative scores, rubrics, qualitative comments) to students about their assessment tasks. ARAF strategies may also involve students in self-assessment and peer-assessment tasks such as self-evaluation of their own assessment tasks using marking rubrics and assessment criteria.

The role of ARAF strategies is often to interrupt the traditional loop of assessment submission by students and grading by lecturers through the promotion of reflection, engagement and action. ARAF strategies can incorporate the use of developmental and diagnostic assessment feedback to influence students' intentions to modify their future learning approaches.

Case Studies [▲]

[Case 1: First year undergraduate unit](#)

CASE STUDY 1

Description
Video
Strategies
Rubric

[Case 2: Third year undergraduate unit](#)

CASE STUDY 2

Description
Video
Strategies
Rubric

[Case 3: Postgraduate unit](#)

CASE STUDY 3

Description
Video
Strategies
Rubric

Figure 5: Transformational Assessment Toolbox, available at: <http://assessment.avondale.edu.au/toolboxat>



Figure 6: Threshold Concepts for Novice Online Teachers, available at: <http://tcs4nots.avondale.edu.au>

The graphic features a grid of grey rectangular cells. At the top, the word "MOOBRIC" is written in large, bold, orange letters. Below it, the phrase "a self-reflection rubric" is written in smaller, bold, black letters. The grid is divided into three horizontal sections. The top section contains a small thumbnail of a rubric with yellow and orange columns, followed by the word "Pedagogy" in bold black text. The middle section contains a small thumbnail of a rubric with blue and white columns, followed by the word "Content" in bold black text. The bottom section contains a small thumbnail of a rubric with pink and white columns, followed by the word "Technology" in bold black text. Below the grid, there are two lines of text: "[Open the interactive MOOBRIC](#)" and "[Download the MOOBRIC overview in PDF](#)".

MOOBRIC
a self-reflection rubric

Pedagogy

Content

Technology

[Open the interactive MOOBRIC](#)

[Download the MOOBRIC overview in PDF](#)

Figure 7: MOOBRIC, available at:
<http://www.moobric.net/>