

## **Discipline Support Strategy for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) has been funded to prepare and implement a Discipline Support Strategy for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. DASSH constitutes an incorporated body which brings together Pro Vice-Chancellors, Executive Deans and Deans from the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities in Universities in Australia and New Zealand. The purposes of this organization are, *inter alia* to advocate for the role of teaching, research and scholarship in the arts, social sciences and humanities (visit the DASSH website at [www.dassh.edu.au](http://www.dassh.edu.au) for more information).

The Discipline Support Strategy for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences will build on the work of the DASSH auspiced Bachelor of Arts scoping project, *Nature and Roles of Arts Degrees in Contemporary Society*. This ALTC project was funded in 2006/2007. For the first time, it was possible to bring together academics from across Australia to look at how the BA is faring and what issues confront it and the sector in a changing higher education scene.

One of the activities which was undertaken as part of the project was the organisation of state-based focus groups, bringing together Deans and Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) area. It became apparent from these meetings that there was a great opportunity to enhance the change agenda in teaching and learning and to explore good practice through sharing experiences and documenting ways in which curriculum renewal, assessment and pedagogical similarities and differences influence, enhance and inform degrees in ASSH. A number of spin-off projects, initiated by DASSH, are beginning to explore some of these issues.

### **Objectives and Intended Outcomes**

Objectives and outcomes of the strategy are:

- An engaged supporting network of Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) sharing knowledge and identifying issues, to inform their faculties about teaching and learning in the ASSH disciplines, including creative arts where appropriate
- Ways in which state-based groups can look at offerings, gaps and successes and where they might work together in areas of small enrolment (eg Languages, Classics)
- Establish a register of excellent practice in all aspects of teaching and learning so that a virtual network can be established and good practice and outcomes are not lost or constantly re-invented
- Recognition that the ASSH Deans are a source of advice and expertise nationally and internationally in teaching and learning in the ASSH disciplines
- Inculcating a culture of good teaching and learning across the disciplines and identifying common approaches that assist student learning
- Planning succession through the encouragement of leadership

Evaluation of the strategy will focus on the capacity of the network to add value to the work of Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) in a complex mixture of disciplines and interdisciplinary areas and on whether staff in the faculties of Arts, Social

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Sciences and Humanities are benefiting from sharing good practice, learning from each other and avoiding duplication of effort.

## Strategies and Activities

A number of strategies are proposed. These include:

1. Establishing a steering committee and network of Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) from the ASSH disciplines – this will involve the Board of DASSH and Executive Officer from DASSH, using the DASSH network
2. Assisting state-based groups to set an agenda for the analysis of needs, possibilities for cooperation and identification of where strengths and weaknesses in particular areas lie (this ties in with an agenda highlighted by the Bradley Review)
3. Identifying international visitors in the country who have expertise in development of good practice in learning and teaching, curriculum development and assessment in and across the ASSH disciplines and those who might be asked to come as visiting scholars, particularly from the UK, Canada and Sweden where Deans, and/or teaching and learning, organizations exist; the Executive Officer of DASSH would be involved
4. Establishing through the DASSH Office a teaching and learning database using material from individual universities which has been identified as either being effective practice or excellent learning occurring
5. Linking the Scholar for the Disciplines, Fellows and the National Teaching Award winners in the ASSH disciplines to provide advice where possible with the network and the Council of Deans; and
6. Utilising the skills and expertise of the Scholar to, *inter alia*,
  - Assist in the establishment of the teaching/learning network
  - Identify national and international expertise for fora and workshops
  - Identify outcomes and learnings from ALTC projects which are general to the ASSH sector
  - Provide input to the state-based workshops
7. Organising professional development for those who are identified as potential leaders in the disciplines.
8. With the steering committee for the network, devising an evaluation plan for the Discipline Support Strategy. Evaluation will be conducted after each activity and on an annual basis, using the DASSH conference. Changes in direction will be documented and a final evaluation will be undertaken.

## Events

A number of events are planned, including:

- May 2009 – Steering Committee convenes
- 2009 – State-based workshops for Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) to identify issues and form networks
- September 2009 – Day Forum at the DASSH Conference, for Prof Development and establishing the network
- September 2010 – Teaching and Learning Forum for Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning)



- 2010 (various dates) – Professional development workshops with Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning)
- April 2011 – National workshops for DASSH members and Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning)

Queries to DASSH Executive Officer at the details below.