PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

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<th>Project Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>Writing groups: Fostering scholarship of teaching in communities of practice’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amount funded:</td>
<td>$9,523</td>
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<td>Chief Investigator/Team Leader:</td>
<td>Dr Cathi McMullen</td>
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<td>Investigator 2</td>
<td>Zelma Bone</td>
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<td>Investigator 3</td>
<td>Dr Deb Clarke</td>
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<td>Investigator 4</td>
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<td>Investigator 5</td>
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<td>Investigator 6</td>
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1. Abstract of completed project

In 2008 this funded project enabled the establishment of a writing group, focused on scholarship of teaching, for Bathurst based academics in the Faculty of Business. The group had 12 members drawn from the School of Marketing and Management (9 members), School of Accounting and Computer Science (2 members) and School of Human Movement (1 member). The writing group met for two hour sessions every 3-4 weeks across the year. With project funds the investigators were able to employ a consultant, Professor Alison Lee (UTS) with experience in both leading and publishing on writing groups. She assisted in developing and sustaining the writing group’s activities across the year and ran several sessions that specifically targeted the needs of the group as members’ writing ability developed. Overall the project was underpinned by an action research approach.

The writing group was a successful activity on several criteria. Outcomes included seven fully refereed teaching-related conference papers and CSU ED presentations by seven group members. Less tangible but just as valuable was that members of the group increased in their confidence as writers, and as reviewers of their colleagues’ work. They felt comfortable sharing their ideas and work-in-progress with the writing group community of practice, and can now confidently reflect on and initiate ideas around scholarship of teaching.
Aims including project rationale

Academics are increasingly being urged not only to reflect on, evaluate and improve their teaching practice but also to produce published output in refereed publications to demonstrate their engagement in scholarship of teaching. This writing group project provided group members with an opportunity to reflect on their teaching practice, share practice with colleagues and develop their teaching practice through the process of scholarship

The project aims were to:

- Encourage and support writing aimed at scholarly publication in learning and teaching in the School of Marketing and Management and the School of Accounting and Computer Science. Each participant’s writing would involve a specific aspect of their teaching practice and would be linked to improved student learning outcomes.
- Provide a dedicated time for writing and help participants formalise and organise their thinking about learning and teaching so that it can be shared with peers and more widely.
- Support the development of skills in giving and receiving feedback
- Facilitate the dissemination of research findings from Faculty of Business Scholarship in Teaching projects.
- Develop investigators’ capabilities in leadership in learning and teaching.
- Contribute to scholarly literature on writing groups and scholarship of teaching.

2. Project methods

Expressions of interests were sought from the Bathurst based schools in the Faculty of Business. Potential members needed to commit to ongoing participation and the production of a paper for submission to a conference or a journal by the end of the year.

This group had 12 members drawn from the School of Marketing and Management (9 members), School of Accounting and Computer Science (2 members) and School of Human Movement (1 member). The three investigators on this project, all of whom had experience in publishing in learning and teaching facilitated the group. While acting as facilitators of the group, they undertook the same activities in the group as other group members, i.e. writing about a particular aspect of their own teaching practice and preparing a paper for publication. Deb Clarke acted as a “broker” (Wenger, 1998) in the writing group community of practice to introduce members to the concept of scholarship in teaching.

The initial meeting introduced staff to the notion of scholarship in teaching and staff negotiated their needs in regard to the purpose of the writing group. It was agreed that meetings be constituted by a variety of components:

- brief input from group facilitators
- discussion/showcase of group members’ writing in progress; and
- quiet writing time.

Each of the meetings followed this pattern however the time assigned to each component varied according to the immediate needs of group members.
Professor Alison Lee (UTS) was employed for three whole day sessions that specifically targeted the needs of the group as members’ writing ability progressed. These sessions focused on:

- purpose of a writing group;
- how to give feedback on others’ work; and
- how to write for specific audiences.

Group members decided to expand their collaboration beyond the initial parameters of the project and organised a two day writing retreat is planned for September 2008. In addition over half of the group travelled together to attend CSUED and present their work. For some members this was their first involvement in CSUED and the first presentation on their teaching practice.

3. Findings including implications for CSU

This project was highly successful in terms of engaging members in discussing and writing about their teaching practice in a scholarly way. This is evidenced by the following publications and presentations developed by writing group members during their participation in the group.

Confucian publications developed in the 2008 writing group


**CSUED presentations by writing group members**

Over half of the members of the writing group presented at CSUED 2008. Of the presenters below four were presenting at CSUED for the first time.

- **Marcelle Droulers** - Voice and text: the use of dialogue circles in a first year Management subject
- **Mark Frost** - Do student selected assessments enhance their retention of key learning outcomes? A study of student centred learning in Business Education
- **Julia Lynch** - Using a portfolio game to link theory to practice in introductory finance
- **Cathi McMullen, Zelma Bone and Deb Clarke** - From teaching practice to scholarship in teaching: the writing group experience.
- **Val Siemionow** - Using process to contextualise content and create meaning.

### 4. Summary & recommendations

Writing groups at a local level provide a dedicated space for writing and facilitate the development of skills and confidence to engage in a more scholarly approach to teaching as well as demonstrating the capacity to share knowledge and experience with colleagues and broader learning and teaching audiences.

### 5. Dissemination of Project Outcomes

Details and results of the project were disseminated at two CSUED conferences and an international journal. Details below:

- **CSU ED 2008**: From teaching practice to scholarship in teaching: the writing group experience. C. McMullen, Z. Bone and D. Clarke
- **CSU ED 2009**: Transforming practice, writing groups and the scholarship of teaching. C. McMullen, D. Clarke and Z. Bone.

### 6. Additional feedback

As this report is for the internal purposes of Learning & Teaching Committee only, project holders may have comments, additional to those in the Final Report Part 1, concerning the following:

6.1 Factors critical to the success of the approach

The use of an external consultant with relevant expertise was important to the project. Use of an ‘outside expert’ played a critical role in developing and sustaining the writing group’s activities across the year and bringing legitimacy to the project. The commitment made to the process before its inception helped to ensure that there was an element of cohesion from the beginning. The group did display a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the group, reflected in the high rate of attendance and
retention of group participants. More than 80% of participants were in attendance for more than 80% of the sessions.

6.2 Factors that impeded its success
The time academics have available to engage in activities such as this and limited value placed on scholarship in teaching versus disciplinary based publication impeded the long term sustainability of the project.

6.3 General lessons learnt, including a reflection on the challenges and unexpected successes
The following benefits were identified from the reflections that the participants wrote after each session and from the records of the meetings that the research team kept. Benefits to group participants (in addition to the specified outcomes on scholarship in teaching) included:

- A safe space for staff to share their current experience, knowledge and skills;
- Engagement with the writing process;
- Growth as scholarly writers;
- Urgent new skill formation;
- Integration of propositional, procedural and dispositional knowledge;
- Self and group evaluation;
- Staff being responsible for their own action and learning and that of others in the group;
- Enhanced capacity to manage one-self, lead others, and plan and manage change

6.4 Other comments
Members of this scholarship in teaching group felt privileged to be involved in such a rewarding project and expressed appreciation for being afforded this opportunity made possible through the scholarship in teaching grant.

7. Financial statement of acquittal of funds

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<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total project expenditure</td>
<td>9486.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total project grant</td>
<td>9523.00</td>
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See attached statement

8. Attachments / Appendices

Please see attached copy of the following journal article: