

Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme



**TEACHERS
HELPING
TEACHERS**

<http://opvclt.monash.edu.au/pats>

Welcome to the third and final newsletter for the CADAD sponsored Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme (PATS), which has seen five Australian universities engage with the scheme in semester 2, 2012. 23 partnerships formed to trial PATS resources and processes across the participating institutions: Edith Cowan University (5 partnerships), The University of Newcastle (3 partnerships), Griffith University (8 partnerships), University of the Sunshine Coast (3 partnerships) and Monash University (4 partnerships).

Aim of scheme

The initial aim of PATS was to provide a structured process to assist academics in improving teaching practice in a supportive peer environment. PATS participants work in a mentee/mentor relationship, a reciprocal relationship, or, more recently, a small group to discuss, assess and evaluate their teaching practice. Originally developed and trialed at Monash University in 2009 to address courses needing critical attention, the scheme has been revised and supported by an OLT National Senior Teaching Fellowship expanding to over ten higher education institutions nationwide, including University of South Australia, Charles Sturt University, University of Tasmania, RMIT and private providers Think Education Group and Kaplan HE.

Preliminary findings

"It was valuable to sit down and bounce ideas off each other" - PATS Participant

Some of the findings to emerge from the focus group sessions reveal that the PATS participants had overwhelmingly positive experiences of the trial. Participants described the scheme as: *"collegial, confidence-building, helpful, informative, structured, interesting, and positive"*.

Impact of scheme

The following is a taste of some of the preliminary findings to have emerged from the student unit evaluation scores and feedback from some of the participating universities.

Monash University

Preliminary student unit evaluation results revealed that all three mentee/mentor partnerships showed an increase for question regarding overall student satisfaction with +0.3, +0.5, +1.3. The reciprocal relationship showed either no change in score, or a slight decrease of -0.1.

Newcastle University

The three partnerships at Newcastle showed very positive results. One partnership produced a considerable increase of +0.8 in overall student satisfaction. Another unit, previously not taught, scored above the university and online unit average. The final unit received too few responses for quantitative analysis, though student comments were very positive: *"Thought this course was exactly what Maths teachers should be doing"* and *"Everything was clear and well organised"*.

GRIFFITH

The majority of the PATS partnerships at Griffith showed an increase in unit evaluation scores with overall increases ranging from +0.1 to +1.0.

Support for the production of this resource has been provided by the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development

Investigative themes:

The following themes and questions have emerged from the analysis of the PATS data:

Barriers academics face

What are the barriers faced by academics wishing to achieve their unit and course goals? These may be internal or external. Are there differences in the perceived barriers depending on an academic's experience, age or gender?

Peer review

How can peer observation be used to enable teachers to achieve their unit and course development goals? In what ways is peer review a support for academics? How can peer review be shaped for blended learning as well as face-to-face learning?

Goals and strategies to improving teaching

How to enable academics to identify and set achievable goals and find suitable and specific strategies to achieve these ends?

Informal student feedback

How do academics obtain and use informal student feedback to improve their units and teaching practice? How do academics interpret and respond to the issues and challenges presented by this at times confronting process?

Future work of interest is the long term impacts of the scheme on participants. As PATS has been running for five years in some faculties, of interest would be the lasting impacts of the scheme on individuals, both mentors and mentees, as well as PATS coordinators.

Project Completion

The CADAD funded PATS project has been underway since early 2012 and is now in its final stages. The following progress has been made:

1. The project team has completed the pre-semester, during semester and post-semester tasks. Team members have worked through the PATS Instructional Workbook and the PATS team is now busy analysing the task data.
2. Unit evaluation results have been collated for each of the institutions to measure any quantifiable improvements in student satisfaction for units taking part in PATS.
3. Focus Group sessions with the PATS participants have been completed. These sessions have drawn together the experiences of mentors and mentees in the trial, and provided feedback on the progress and outcomes. The data will assist in the development of future PATS projects.
4. Creation of PATS coordinators at each institution.
5. The project team has submitted for review an article to the journal *Studies in Higher Education* describing the experiences of PATS coordinators engaging academics with the Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme.

The team are currently in the process of investigating the types of barriers academics face to unit/teaching improvement and the types of goals and strategies they set for themselves.

What's next...

- In-depth analysis of focus group and task data
- Collation and analysis of unit evaluation data
- OLT National Fellowship started in October 2012 to expand PATS to further higher education institutions nationwide and to broaden its alignment to the Teaching Standards Framework

CONTACT

If you wish to provide feedback or comment on the CADAD sponsored PATS program, please feel free to contact:

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