



## RESEARCH OVERVIEW: IMPLICATIONS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

### Higher education in TAFE

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A project funded through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation program investigated higher education programs—mostly bachelor's and associate degrees—offered by TAFE institutes. This overview highlights some of the implications for staff development identified through this project.

#### Findings

**Higher education teachers in TAFE need development and support that are distinct from that required by other TAFE teachers and also those working in higher education institutions.**

Higher education curriculum—which is informed by scholarship as much as practice—is based on content, not competences (*Main report*, p. 19). Higher education teachers in TAFE institutes often lack institutional support for the higher education curriculum development and scholarship normally available in higher education institutions (*Main report*, p. 38).

**The first requirement for higher education teachers is the completion of a master's program with at least a minor thesis or a doctorate.**

Higher education teachers need to hold a qualification that is one level above the level that they teach. Completing a master's degree with a minor thesis helps teachers engage with scholarship and prepares them for doctoral studies. Teachers need part-time time release over four years to complete a master's and over eight years to complete a doctorate.

**Higher education teachers need to establish 'communities of practice' in their field to develop curriculum, enhance pedagogy and maintain standards.**

Much of higher education's curriculum and pedagogy are developed and transmitted, and standards maintained: through formal and collegiate collaborations in departments which typically comprise at least five experts in the field; between institutions; in disciplinary associations; in conferences; through the scholarly literature, particularly journals; and by staff exchanges. These kinds of arrangements need to be available for higher education teachers in TAFE (*Main report*, p. 38).

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# Higher education in TAFE

Higher education teachers need time, resources and other support to enable them to develop scholarship in their field.

Considerable time and resources need to be invested to develop high levels of scholarship in TAFE higher education teachers to maintain their competence and to meet higher education accreditation requirements. Higher education teachers working in TAFE require time to meet colleagues in other institutions, time release to attend meetings of their discipline and professional associations, time and funding to attend at least one national conference each year, access to relevant scholarly literature such as through external access and borrowing rights at a neighbouring university, and opportunities to participate in a staff exchange, ideally, every three years (*Main report*, p.38).

Some of the resources and support for higher education teachers in TAFE institutes may best be provided by a combination of collaboration between TAFE institutes and national programs.

TAFE institutes do not yet have the quality and depth of resources to support higher education staff development and scholarship. Organisations such as the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA), the Higher Education Research and Development Society

of Australasia (HERDSA) and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) should be approached for help in establishing forums, associations, conferences and other mechanisms to support collegiate and formal collaboration between TAFE institutes offering higher education (*Main report*, p.41). ALTC should consider whether it has a role in establishing a program such as the HE in FE Enhancement Programme supported by the United Kingdom's Higher Education Academy (*Main report*, p.14; *Literature review*, p.18).

### About the project

The project examined the growth and implications of higher education offered by TAFE institutes. It sought to understand the purposes of such programs, how they have been developed and implemented, the impact they are having on institutional partnerships, how they are perceived by participants, and whether they create opportunities for students.

The project involved a survey of bachelor degrees offered by TAFE's equivalents in Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. It also reviewed the literature on higher education in TAFE's equivalents in those countries. In addition, the project team conducted 98 interviews in six states and territories.

### Further information

More information is available from the various publications associated with the project:

- the **research overviews**, which discuss the implications of the research for TAFE teachers, TAFE managers, staff development and public policy, as well as the issues raised about the status of TAFE degrees, NCVER, Adelaide, 2009, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2189.html>>
- the **discussion paper**, *Higher education in TAFE: An issues paper* by Gavin Moodie, Leesa Wheelahan, Stephen Billett and Ann Kelly, NCVER, Adelaide, 2009, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2139.html>>
- the **main report**, *Higher education in TAFE* by Leesa Wheelahan, Gavin Moodie, Stephen Billett and Ann Kelly, NCVER, Adelaide, 2009, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2167.html>>
- the **literature review**, by Leesa Wheelahan, *Higher education in TAFE: Support document*, NCVER, Adelaide, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2167.html>>

Additional information is available from:

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This overview is based on the research report, *Higher education in TAFE* by Leesa Wheelahan, Gavin Moodie, Stephen Billett and Ann Kelly. Visit <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2167.html> for more information.