

# GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

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As part of the Self Review process, examples of good practice were collected from across the University, particularly relating to the two themes of international activities and flexible and blending learning. They constitute examples of stories which exemplify changes and improvements that the University has made in its academic activities.

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES</b> .....  | <b>2</b>  |
| 1. Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (FAFU).....  | 2         |
| 2. Bachelor of Professional Nursing for International Students .....   | 2         |
| 3. Partnerships in Bhutan: .....   | 2         |
| 4. Socio-cultural Resilience: Investigating Indigenous community empowerment in negotiating terms of cultural change .....                                   | 3         |
| 5. Research collaboration: Genetic and environmental influences on literacy and language .....   | 3         |
| 6. Example of the changes to Advanced Standing: Wuxi South Ocean College .....   | 3         |
| 7. ELC Placement Test Results of Students from Wuxi South Ocean College .....  | 4         |
| <b>FLEXIBLE/BLENDED LEARNING</b> .....   | <b>5</b>  |
| 8. Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics) – MAAL .....   | 5         |
| 9. Partnerships in Rural Medicine .....  | 5         |
| 10. Sakai: Distance Learning and Teaching in the School of Education .....   | 6         |
| 11. Learning Commons.....  | 7         |
| 12. Blended Learning in Nursing.....   | 7         |
| 13. Teaching Collaborations and Flexible Learning .....  | 8         |
| 14. Innovation in Professional Experience .....  | 9         |
| 15. eReserve and Exam Papers Online .....  | 9         |
| 16. Modularisation of Unit Content .....   | 9         |
| 17. eSkills UNE and eSkills Plus.....  | 10        |
| 18. Virtual supervision of professional experience .....   | 10        |
| 19. A collaborative approach to enabling sciences courses at regional Universities in New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and Victoria ..... | 10        |
| 20. New Bachelor of Music provides flexible learning and innovation.....   | 11        |
| 21. Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education .....   | 12        |
| 22. Sheep and wool units via distance .....  | 12        |
| 23. NEA and community engagement .....   | 13        |
| 24. BA Online Project .....  | 13        |
| <b>OTHER GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES</b> .....  | <b>18</b> |
| 25. Bachelor of Social Work.....   | 18        |
| 26. Environmental Engineering collaboration .....  | 18        |
| 27. Making a difference in regional communities .....  | 19        |
| 28. Developing investigation skills in RailCorp.....   | 19        |

# International Activities

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## 1. Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (FAFU)

*Submitted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

UNE has a partner agreement with Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University – enrolments in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in the Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning, Bachelor of Environmental Science and Bachelor of Agriculture. Staff from both institutions have initiated a joint research project that uses leading edge genomic technology to investigate two important fungal pathogens of plants with the long-term aim of developing new methods for disease control. Professor Zonghua Wang (FAFU), Associate Professor Margaret Katz (UNE) and Dr David Backhouse (UNE) have applied for funding from the International Science Linkages Australia-China Special Fund for Science and Technology Cooperation to support the collaborative research project. This project will strengthen the partnership through development of collaborative research of importance to agriculture in both China and Australia. The research collaboration will involve the visit of research students from the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University to the University of New England.

## 2. Bachelor of Professional Nursing for International Students

*Submitted by the School of Health*

In 2008 the School of Health accepted the first cohort of 20 students from India into the new Bachelor of Professional Nursing, a degree course specifically designed for nurses registered with the Indian Nursing Council. Nurses who graduate from this course will benefit both from upgrading their qualifications, as well as receiving the recognition that comes from holding an international health qualification. Australia is a leading nation for health care education and the University of New England has been at the forefront of nurse education longer than any other university in Australia.

This opportunity for Indian registered nurses to upgrade their qualifications to Bachelor level has been developed in consultation with INSCOL Healthcare Limited. While the course does not lead to registration as a nurse in Australia, it will enhance the students' nursing careers, as well as provide them with the experience of a lifetime through overseas study.

The Bachelor of Professional Nursing is a one-year full-time on-campus degree available to Indian nurses who have completed a Diploma in Nursing and are registered with the Indian Nursing Council. The course comprises 8 units of study covering nursing, health management and counseling offered by the School of Health at UNE to specifically meet the learning needs of these students.

This course provides students with core advanced healthcare knowledge that is also designed to reflect UNE graduate attributes. The course provides students with opportunities to enhance their critical, reflective and applied abilities and provides a pathway to pursue further study at the Master's level.

## 3. Partnerships in Bhutan:

*Submitted by the School of Education*

The School of Education has been partnered by the Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan for over a decade in the professional development of rural and remote teachers from Bhutan. Over this time more than 140 teachers have been trained in multi-grade and student-centred learning techniques. The formal training takes place at UNE and then the informal training takes place in two attachments of the teachers in rural schools in Armidale, Tamworth and Coffs Harbour regions. The project thus exemplifies co-operation amongst communities as a consequence of UNE's regional to global mission. Several research papers have resulted from this collaboration and the work has facilitated more than 30 Masters and two EdD completions of Bhutanese students at UNE.

#### **4. Socio-cultural Resilience: Investigating Indigenous community empowerment in negotiating terms of cultural change**

*Submitted by the School of Education*

In investigating the link between cultural resilience and social well-being, this transnational comparative research project has established local and international collaborative partnerships from academic, Government, non-Government and corporate fields. Organisations participating in the research project include: the University of Botswana, the University of Tromsø, Menzies School of Health Research, DeBeers Group, Letloa, Ditswanelo, Northern Territory Government, the Anindilyakwa Land Council, East Arnhem Shire Council, CSR Sydney Pty Ltd. The project investigates issues of agency and social change in two Indigenous groups, the San of Botswana and the Anindilyakwa of East Arnhem Land. The chief investigators are Dr Inga Brasche and Dr Bob Boughton.

#### **5. Research collaboration: Genetic and environmental influences on literacy and language**

*Submitted by the School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Sciences.*

UNE has a long-standing collaboration with researchers in the USA and Scandinavia in a research project studying literacy growth in young children. The study, which was initiated by Professor Brian Byrne of the Discipline of Psychology, has recruited 1000 pairs of twin children in Australia, the US, Sweden, and Norway, and followed their progress in literacy and language from ages 4 to 9, with planned extension to adolescence. It has been jointly funded by the Australian Research Council, the US National Institutes of Health, and the Research Councils of Sweden and Norway, with additional assistance from UNE and the University of Stavanger. It has so far generated a dozen journal articles and six book chapters documenting the relative influences of genetic and environmental variation on levels of literacy and language in early childhood.

More recently, the Language and Cognition Research Centre at UNE initiated a cross-national study of second language acquisition, again using twin methodology to partition the variability with which students master new languages into its genetic and environmental components. Researchers in the US, Norway, the Netherlands and Great Britain have joined in this effort, and data collection is underway across the research network. Dr Liz Ellis, Dr Will Coventry, Dr Inés Anton-Mendez and Professor Brian Byrne make up the academic component of the local team.

#### **6. Advanced Standing at Wuxi South Ocean College**

UNE first established a relationship with Wuxi South Ocean College in 2000. UNE offered the Bachelor of Commerce under a 1+2 cooperative teaching model. The students learned English in the first year and became students of UNE for the second and third years. During the two years of their UNE award the students were taught by English speaking teachers within a western model of lectures and tutorials.

In 2005 the arrangement changed to a formal Advanced Standing arrangement. Wuxi students now undertake 2-2.5 years study at WSOC (including English Language), and then transfer with Advanced Standing into a Bachelor of Business program for their final 1.5-2 years study on campus at UNE Armidale. The demand for Computer Science courses has diminished and these are no longer offered.

To ensure the quality and equivalence of the units for which UNE provides advanced standing, UNE provides guidance on the development of appropriate curriculum and has in place a process of review where every WSOC unit for which advanced standing is granted is evaluated on a three year cycle as to its equivalence to the appropriate UNE unit. In addition two visits a year are made by the Team Leader to WSOC and UNE sends over one teacher a semester to undertake development activities with staff and students including providing guidance on curriculum development.

The WSOC-UNE partnership is the university's largest foreign student program and is growing. In 2008 there were 119 WSOC students studying at UNE, compared to 53 in 2007 and 97 in 2006. Should rapid growth eventuate at Wuxi the Self Review Team noted the need for associated student support development in Armidale.

## **7. ELC Placement Test Results of Wuxi Students**

*Submitted by the English Language Centre*

There are considerable differences in many cases between the Wuxi students' English proficiency results on the English Language Centre (ELC) placement test on arrival at UNE and the IELTS test scores (5.0) on which their conditional offers were based (see table below). Students with an IELTS score of 5.0 should have an overall rating of 2 on our placement test scale and this rating should be attained in each category of the test. This Centre categorically stands by the validity of the ELC placement test, which has been trialled and used extensively in the ELC.

The reality is that a substantial number of these students will need considerably more support and ELC study time than originally estimated. In order to give these students the best possible chance of successfully completing their ELC program, those who attained an overall score of a weak 2 or 1 are placed in four hours of support classes each week. All ELC students have their progress monitored and if deemed 'at risk' they are given guidance and assistance in ways that best optimise their learning outcomes.

The issue of Wuxi students arriving with less English than expected is currently being explored by a working party, with UNE representatives visiting Wuxi in April to observe delivery of their English language program and to address quality assurance aspects. Arising from this visit a report of recommendations will be written, reviewed by the working party, presented to the appropriate Head of School and other senior University staff as appropriate. In due course recommendations seen as beneficial to the desired outcomes of the Wuxi agreement will be actioned.

25 Wuxi students arriving this year were tested for reading / grammar (QPT), listening, writing, and speaking. Of the 25:

- 6 students attained level 2 entry convincingly;
- 9 students attained weak level 2 entry scores; and
- 10 students attained level 1 entry- meaning they need a 30 week program

Of the last group of 10 students, 3 registered a General English level 1 (Elementary) rating for at least one component of their test.

# Flexible/Blended Learning

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## 8. Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics) – MAAL

*Submitted by School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences*

First launched in 2001, the MAAL quickly established itself as the largest postgraduate degree in the Faculty of the Arts and Sciences with over 200 students across 30 countries. It is a flexible, fully online program, closely meeting the needs of language education professionals who want to upgrade their competencies and qualifications while continuing to work. Most students are located outside Australia.

The MAAL represents UNE best practice in online pedagogy. The content delivery uses a variety of online tools and media, with the emphasis on interactivity and on developing conceptual depth. Students and staff participate in an academic and social ‘virtual classroom’, where they learn much from collaboration and interaction with each other. The MAAL has been developed by a team in linguistics who combine world-class standing in their disciplines with unparalleled experience in online curriculum development and practice. With the support of programmers and educational developers, MAAL is being continually upgraded and improved so as to maintain its place at the forefront of its field.

Some representative quotes from former students:

The online delivery of the MAAL gives me the flexibility [to fit study into my busy schedule] and the ability to interact in a very tangible way with the unit coordinators as well as other students – Rachael Hooper, Switzerland

What I found most rewarding, however, was the international component: having classmates of all ages, in varied professions and far-flung locations, offered perspectives far broader than those of a traditional classroom – Jennie Farnell, USA.

## 9. Partnerships in Rural Medicine

*Submitted by the School of Rural Medicine*

The School of Rural Medicine, UNE accepted its first enrolment of 61 students in 2008 enrolled in the Joint Medicinal Program (JMP). The School was officially opened by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard who noted that the school has been “built on a very special partnership”.

The Joint Medical Program is conducted jointly between the UNE, University of Newcastle and HNEAHS and North Sydney and Central Coast Area Health Services with local clinicians and community representatives who are committed to addressing the recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural and remote Australia.

The development of rules for overseeing JMP operations including program delivery, examinations and the roles of members has been a major accomplishment. These have been endorsed by the University of New England Academic Board and University of Newcastle Senate. There has also been development of a clinical school discussion paper reflecting the role out of year 3-5 between the two universities and combined area health services, and a Capital developmental pool grant endorsed by JMP partners, divisions of general practice and community organisations to facilitate the development of teaching practices in the region with co-investment from many stakeholders.

Another example of partnership is the commencement of students in clinical placement in Hunter New England Area Health Service’s Armidale Hospital, Armidale Private Hospital, local general practices and nursing homes. MOUs have been signed with Armidale private hospitals and nursing homes.

The School has received support from community groups with many students receiving scholarships including Hyman scholarships, John Nevin Scholarship, Cotton Scholarship, Scholarships for Anatomy Club and a Royal Australasian College of Pathologists Scholarship. The School of Rural Medicine has broader missions to

address rural health workforce issues, expand our rural health research and postgraduate training. In December, 2008, the school will host a national course for surgery registrars and radiology registrars teaching anatomy by dissection. Research has expanded with 5 doctoral students enrolled and one student jointly supervised with the School of Health graduating with a Doctorate of Health Service Management. The School is developing international links with rural medical school in the Asia Pacific region. A memorandum of understanding with Naresuan University, Thailand was signed in October, 2008 with the scope for collaborative rural health research and medical student placements between the two regions.

### **Activities which support students**

Highlights for the school have included the development of the anatomy club which teaches anatomy by dissection conducted by A/Prof Fiona Stewart and Dr Bob French. This has been highly evaluated by students. Some of the medical students taught in the anatomy club became assistant teachers when in December, 2008, the school hosted a national course for surgery registrars and radiology registrars teaching anatomy by dissection.

### **New Teaching Methods**

The JMP is undertaking an extensive mapping process of the present curriculum to better define learning outcomes.

An audit of teaching places in rural areas has been undertaken.

An audience response system has been implemented to improve student interaction and feedback. This is in the initial stages of evaluation.

There has been considerable investment into simulation training facilities including Sim mannequins, venesection models and HARVEY with the scope for multidisciplinary training with school of health.

## **10. Sakai: Distance Learning and Teaching in the School of Education**

*Submitted by the School of Education*

Following the 2005 Review of Distance Education, internal competitive grants were made available to support Faculty-based projects that would contribute to achieving the recommendations of the Review. A joint Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and School of Education project was conceptualised to enhance online teaching and learning in distance education units of study.

The project focused on the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) and the innovative redesign and development of the Master of Education (e-learning), reflecting modern trends and current best practice in education and training for professionals who wish to apply new pedagogies and technologies in life-long professional learning contexts. In addition, the project has provided the opportunity to trial the open source Learning Management System (LMS), Sakai, and related pedagogies for Web 2.0 technologies. Key to the significant professional learning facilitation of School of Education staff through participatory action research (PAR) was the employment of a half time educational developer embedded within the School of Education.

Impressive outcomes have been achieved in the project to date. There has been significant up-skilling of academic and support staff in the use of appropriate pedagogies for technology-supported learning, while redesigning their print-based units for technology-supported distance learning modes. There have been a number of innovations in Phase 1 involving 11 units of study in the BTeach (Primary) including:

- podcasting- the integration of audio and visual elements delivered online and in some instances supplemented by CD;
- group strategies to create interaction between students using online communication tools (forums, blogs & wikis);
- case studies to stimulate discussion and problem solution strategies for student cohorts;
- alternative assessment strategies incorporating use of progressive online testing;
- video segments to illustrate important concepts in music;
- investigation of e-portfolios to enhance practicum placement reflections;
- consideration of strategies for mathematics involving audio/video, and the use of equation editors and excel spreadsheets;
- four units of the MEd (e-learning) have been redesigned. Further discussions are to be held with UNEP regarding provision of modularised sections of each unit to meet niche markets, and with the

New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSWIT) with a view to providing specific professional development opportunities for accredited teachers.

Significant productive cultural change has been precipitated by this project in the School of Education extending beyond those directly involved to a large proportion of the School staff. Joint work with the TLC has been enhanced and collaboration with the School of Health has occurred. The professional learning of many staff has been effectively facilitated and several publications, mainly by junior staff and the educational developer, have resulted.

## 11. Learning Commons

*Submitted by Dixon Library*

Between November 2007 and March 2008, the Ground Floor of the University Library was refurbished with CDP funding as a technology-rich Learning Commons. New facilities include updated and additional computer workstations, consultation spaces, group work rooms fitted with rich communications technology options, a training lab, media rooms and a recording studio. Importantly for direct and flexible delivery of University services, the Commons offers students a single access point for a wide range of integrated student support services including IT HelpDesk and Academic Skills at a central and shop-front location. The integration of services into a single point, moreover, has liberated higher professional staff to increase Faculty contact and develop flexible service delivery innovations.

The study rooms, computer suites and open-plan, informal learning spaces in the Commons have proved extremely popular. Student visits to the Library have more than doubled since March 2008 and an increased volume of online coursework is directly conducted via machines in the computer suite. The Commons has also been well-received by university staff. It is an increasingly popular venue for training sessions, workshops and other teaching and official activities.

### e-Learning Commons

e-Learning Commons is a broad label for a range of virtual library services that complement the Learning Commons and provide off-campus students with equivalent access to Library assistance as that offered on campus. MyLibrary and MyAssist are parallel enhancements to the University's broad MyUNE portal. They include features allowing customised electronic content to be delivered to different categories of students, assignment tools, a research products sandbox and research guides. These portals also serve to link distance students to the support services based in the Learning Commons.

Following the release of the enhanced myUNE portal in February 2008, student usage increased sharply. In times of peak demand, as many as 8,000 students visited myUNE in a single day. For most of 2008, student visitors averaged 4,000–5,000. These figures are well in excess of the 2007 totals and demonstrate the attractiveness of the enhanced myUNE architecture.

## 12. Blended Learning in Nursing

*Submitted by the School of Health*

The new 'blended learning' undergraduate nursing curriculum at UNE has been a 2 stage development undertaken to respond to the needs of the healthcare industry and the global shortage of professional nurses. The first stage involved updating the learning outcomes and content to reflect current evidence-based nursing practice. The Nurses & Midwives Board of NSW granted approval for this stage of the new curriculum in December 2006. In 2008 the Nursing Course Team of the School of Health was successful in gaining some Academic Renewal funding from UNE to assist with conceptualising and developing the new curriculum to allow for more flexible delivery options, a strategy needed to encourage more students into nursing courses, provide all students with more options to assist them to complete their studies as well as enhance their skills with e-technology. *Blended learning* is the primary mode in which the UNE nursing course is offered to students and will provide them access to an innovative, high quality, flexible and challenging nursing education. Blended learning means an approach that integrates *face-to-face* academic/student and

student/student learning opportunities with the best of distance education technology. This curriculum development work progressed throughout 2007 and 2008, culminating in the approval of the new 'blended learning' curriculum in December 2008, by the Nurses & Midwives Board of NSW that allows 2nd & 3rd year nursing students to study as either on or off campus students. Those who opt to take the off campus option study via a combination of intensive schools, structured and supported online learning activities and clinical practice blocks. This new curriculum also incorporates multiple entry and exit points leading to two tiers of nursing qualification: an Advanced Diploma in Nursing and a Bachelor of Nursing where the former leads to Enrolled Nurse and the latter to Registered Nurse status. The new flexibility in the course also allows those who are already Enrolled Nurses to upgrade to a Bachelor of Nursing and Registered Nurse status by studying for 2 years full-time.

### **13. Teaching Collaborations and Flexible Learning**

*Submitted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

#### **Blended Model**

This is an innovative collaborative teaching model for the delivery of language courses at Australian universities. Essentially, UNE's blended model of language teaching is based on combining an enhanced distance education approach with face-to-face contact and online computer assisted language learning materials and support. Students remain students of the host institution, they are enrolled as such and the face-to-face contact takes place at that institution's campus.

This model provides an opportunity for offering courses in languages that are less commonly taught. Cooperative ventures between universities and based on the UNE blended model allow departments with one or two staff members to augment their programs with complementary units from other disciplines.

To date universities involved in this collaboration have included the University of Newcastle, James Cook University, Southern Queensland University and Sunshine Coast University. Disciplines involved are Chinese, French, German, Indonesian and Italian. The UNE model of delivery is one of 4 being evaluated by DASSH in its CASR funded project on 'Innovative approaches to the provision of languages in Australian Higher Education'.

#### **RULI Project**

UNE is the project leader for the Regional Universities Indonesian Language Initiative (RULI) funded by a CASR Grant of \$369,000. UNE is collaborating with the Universities of the Sunshine Coast, Tasmania and Charles Darwin in Australia and Mataram University in Indonesia to develop and deliver Indonesian language programs that combine the resources of all four universities. The initiative is designed to enrich current programs and includes the development of a common curriculum between the participating universities.

#### **STAT100: Flexible Learning**

Academic renewal funds in 2007 and Faculty Teaching and Learning Development Funds in 2009 supported the ongoing development of the introductory statistics service unit, STAT100. This redevelopment has resulted in the learning support provided in the unit becoming increasingly effective for both on- and off-campus students (supporting evidence available on request). The unit offers a model of learning that delivers learning resources and activities that are accessible to all students regardless of location.

Most recent innovations in STAT100 include the development of:

- a software installation wizard to overcome student frustration with the software and address the problem of attrition among off campus students (new in 09);
- demonstration videos using screen capture software to show students how to use statistical software and equation editors (new in 09);
- online quizzes to encourage student learning of fundamental statistical concepts;
- online practical exercises, incorporating instantaneous feedback, allowing students to promptly check their responses against exemplary answers (new in 09, but trialed in 08);
- incorporating interactive applets that allow students to explore fundamental concepts first hand;
- incorporating lecture slides and podcasts online, providing access to learning material for all students.

### **STAT260 & STAT261: Flexible Learning**

Second year statistics units have been redeveloped to include modern methods such as simulation techniques and Bayesian inference. This includes web material so that external students can work effectively on computer intensive methods. The new methods are compared with classical methods through use of the same examples and, where possible, consistent notation. The computing methods utilise programming skills that students acquire in the applied maths units.

## **14. Innovation in Professional Experience**

*Submitted by the Professional Experience Office, School of Education*

Professional experience in the School of Education has taken on new initiatives during 2008 and 2009. Responding to a major need to enhance the distance education experience for students undertaking school placements, the professional experience office has introduced a range of online activities to help prepare students for their placements. Forum activities and modules on important topics such as child protection and professional expectations have helped distance education students to approach their placements with more confidence.

The professional experience component of teacher education awards has also been enhanced through a variety of liaison with school approaches including phone calls early in placements to maintain links with schools and to provide an avenue for communication should difficulties arise. Practicum Liaison Officers have been employed to visit many of our distance education students through this initiative. This will be further enhanced in 2009 with cyclic visits to other states.

## **15. eReserve and Exam Papers Online**

*Submitted by Dixon Library*

eReserve was specifically designed with the needs of off campus students in mind and as a tool for the University to move teaching programs to a flexible online environment for all students. It provides high-demand unit readings in a robust and Copyright compliant environment 24/7 to staff and students of UNE anywhere on the globe where internet access is available. The service currently delivers over 23,000 documents as pdf images on local servers or via "deep linking" to subscribed electronic journal articles.

eReserve has been overwhelmingly embraced by students and is a mainstream element in UNE learning. Downloads from eReserve in 2008 totalled 399,211 documents, and from Exam Papers Online 98,048 documents, totalling 497,259 uses between the two services. Download patterns indicate that students are accessing eReserve resources day and night, and across long periods in semesters, affirming the flexibility and robustness of the system and demonstrating high levels of student confidence and take-up. Over the last five years, eReserve has also provided a platform for course coordinators to migrate from distributing static unit reading "bricks" in paper or CD to a dynamic teaching environment.

The value and accessibility of eReserve was enhanced in 2008 by redevelopment to add functionality and allow embedding in the myUNE / myUnits environment. The 2008 upgrade included a facility allowing documents added since early 2008 to be read by "read aloud" software. This has provided not only better access for students with a print disability, but also additional flexibility for students who have a learning preference for this form of 'vocal/listening' learning mode. eReserve continues to prove itself a robust and powerful tool of high value in the development of the UNE teaching program.

## **16. Modularisation of Unit Content**

*School of Environmental and Rural Sciences*

Modularising Entomology teaching unit to increase flexibility and relevance to the university, entomology students and their professional communities of practice, provides appreciable benefits. Modules are

independently marketable, combinable and adaptable to changing learner and industry needs. Modularisation makes much more effective use of educational front-loading especially in dynamic work environments increasingly characterised by shorter innovation cycles. Modularisation makes it easier to take the learning requirements of individuals (and industry) into account and adds flexibility to the current structure, enabling better integration into future teaching structures. New modules can be more easily generated with comparatively little effort by devising novel combinations of existing units. The ability to choose from a wider range of topics is of considerable benefit to students wishing to specialise in certain aspects of entomology. Modularisation offers improved economy and efficiency of delivery through the exploitation of economies of scale and scope, such as easier redevelopment or re-ordering of existing elements into new programs and the development and inclusion of new modules. A potential income stream may also be generated by making the unit/modules available to other institutions and offering them off-shore in partnership with other institutions.

## **17. eSkills UNE and eSkills Plus**

*Submitted by Dixon Library*

eSKILLS UNE is the University Library's suite of online tutorials on information designed specifically for undergraduate students. Aimed directly at newly-enrolled off-campus and isolated students, the program allows undergraduates to gain confidence in all stages of assignment completion. The lessons in eSKILLS UNE take undergraduates through the entire range of IL competencies required for independent learning.

eSKILLS UNE has achieved national and international recognition. Within Australia, eSKILLS UNE has been held up as a model of best-practice by institutions such as EdNA and AUQA, and the team responsible for its creation received a Carrick Citation in 2006. Universities in different countries have chosen eSKILLS UNE as the basis for their own information literacy projects. The University of Granada, representing eleven Spanish universities, has translated eSKILLS UNE into Spanish to serve as a starting point for a local IL course. Closer to home, the University of Auckland has also requested permission to modify eSKILLS UNE to meet the needs of their students. Launched in 2001, eSKILLS UNE is revised regularly and was redeveloped in 2004 and 2007.

eSKILLS Plus is a higher level program aimed at postgraduate students. The principal areas of support and assistance provided are in the areas of 'research skills' and 'mastering the literature' with the added specific modules of EndNote training and career development.

Under continuing development these programs are being enhanced with additional opportunities for social networking, provision of development feedback and a podcast library of directly relevant materials.

## **18. Virtual supervision of professional experience**

*Submitted by the School of Education*

In 2008 the UNE School of Education as part of a DEEWR funded Research project awarded to Dr Stephen Winn has been involved in a project that utilises synchronous video conference links from UNE Armidale to Department of Education NSW schools in the NE Region of the state. This project supported by DET NSW includes up to 10 schools and will utilise in-class cameras to link to schools to observe pre-service teacher educators while teaching. The project has had considerable interest from DEEWR particularly around inclusion, enhancing quality teacher education training and explicit links with peak educational providers. Key DET NSW members include the Deputy Director General of DET NSW, Regional Executive Director, Des Gorman, and District director Jim White. In addition disability service providers have been keen to be involved in the project particularly where students from UNE are undertaking professional experience.

## **19. A collaborative approach to enabling sciences courses at regional Universities in New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and Victoria**

*Submitted by School of Science and Technology*

This CASR (Collaborative And Structural Reform) project approved by DEST late in 2007 involves a partnership between Charles Darwin University (CDU), The University of Southern Queensland (USQ), The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), The University of New England (UNE), The University of Canberra (UC), and Deakin University (DU). The objective is to explore ways to efficiently harness each institution's niche discipline strengths in chemistry, physics and environmental sciences and to develop, construct and make available to students at the participating universities, packages of high quality shared science discipline units.

A broad project goal is to retain science discipline core degrees in Australian regional Universities through providing more viable larger class sizes per unit for the delivering institution(s), yet fewer overall science units needed on offer by each individual institution to maintain a full science program. Students will be able to enrol cross-institutionally as necessary for the combined suite of units identified through this project using a variety of delivery modes including: flexible / distance learning; on-line; and intensively. Project funding (\$897,400) is available over 2008-2010 for time release of academic staff, instructional design and multimedia development to ensure high quality learning materials for students.

This project is consistent with current AUQA priorities since it will facilitate cross-institutional benchmarking of teaching and learning standards among participating institutions, and will lead to increased awareness of best practice in the sector, particularly in relation to on-line and distance education provision for the sciences using the latest technologies. The project team will also explore opportunities for up-skilling science teachers in schools, through making available the units on offer either as single study options for in-service study, or combinations of units could be packaged as a certificate or a diploma, and branded by all participating institutions. In addition, the project will enhance articulation arrangements between participating universities, and provide opportunities for exploration of better RPL processes and entry pathways for VET sector graduates into the university sector. The lead organisation Charles Darwin University is already a fully integrated VET / Higher Education institution.

This proposal also intersects well with a current Carrick Institute sponsored investigation being undertaken by the Science Deans within Australia looking into the future of undergraduate science laboratory training. Distance science programs offered within Australia already use intensive block laboratory schools for units, and this approach could be further rolled out so that students enrol cross-institutionally for the theory components but undertake their laboratory work at their home institution. Alternatively, opportunities for breaking down the assumed necessary nexus of science laboratory and theory teaching and learning will be explored in this project, and may result in the creation of carefully crafted common Laboratory Skills and Generic Skills units for use by the participating institutions. These skills units would be scaffolded over the three year undergraduate science degree curriculum, and would be strongly informed by employer and industry views of critical skills needs in graduates.

At the initial project meeting of the steering group in February 2008 held at CDU, it was decided to first embark on the Chemistry project discipline activities, since there was an immediate common interest in seeking ways to provide a Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI) accredited Chemistry program at all of the participating regional institutions. Associate Professor Trevor Brown from UNE will lead the Chemistry project panel, and the overall CASR project is headed by Professor Graham Pegg, from CDU. UNE in Armidale NSW has an RACI accredited distance study program in Chemistry fully available by flexible study and further elaboration of units / subjects from UNE may provide ready access to a shared chemistry unit warehouse available by cross-institutional study. Discussions with other distance providers of chemistry units from institutions not in the core project group of six should also occur to determine the broader scope and options available to the project team.

## **20. New Bachelor of Music provides flexible learning and innovation**

*Submitted by the School of Arts*

In 2007, the Discipline of Music with funding from Academic Renewal developed a new program of units for a Bachelor of Music degree commencing in 2008. This has transformed the discipline's offerings from a position of no online teaching to where almost 70% of units offered over the two year cycle are either fully online or have non-mandatory intensive school attendance requirements for distance education students. This shift

provides a high degree of flexible learning for this category of students, many of whom are people with family and other responsibilities. It also enables more regular engagement with lecturers, translating into greater levels of skills and knowledge acquisition. Students have been further advantaged by updating of the conceptual bases of musical knowledge and technologies made possible through the process of Academic Renewal. The new course and units have been designed with a focus on producing graduates with knowledge and a skillsbase suitable to regional contexts in music education, while also satisfying the new requirements for graduate music teachers established by the NSW Institute of Teachers. New units are modularised and taught by a team of experts, providing flexible options for the design of future units and best practice in the provision of expert knowledge at all levels of tertiary study.

## 21. Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education

The Graduate Certificate in Higher Education was initiated in 1998, prior to which there was no certified course in higher education teaching and learning. Initially the course was open to UNE staff only and offered face-to-face, on-campus. Offerings were then opened up in DE mode and to staff from other institutions. Over time the GCHE has evolved, as the course structure, content and assessment had to be very flexible and practical, based in the real-life work of the enrolled students. The Graduate Certificate has a unit of study called Education Technology which introduces use of technology in delivery.

The number of completions is quite low (76 completions since 1999), and on average staff take 1.5-2 years to complete part-time but there are a few who accelerate and complete in 1 year and others who take up to 4 years to complete. To address issues of low numbers and to harness synergies with other institutions UNE initiated a Carrick project to develop a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education<sup>1</sup> in collaboration with:

- Central Queensland University
- University of Ballarat
- Edith Cowan University
- University of Canberra

Each of the universities offers a core unit as a foundation for the Graduate Certificate. Candidates then complete the Core Unit and an elective unit offered by their own institution and then choose two electives from those offered by the other institutions. This program enables a number of smaller universities to offer high quality teaching development programs, by minimising the workload in developing and delivering the program for individual institutions, in times when universities are expected to raise standards of teaching but are also under financial pressures.

## 22. Sheep and wool units via distance

*Submitted by Sheep and Wool Science*

UNE delivers sheep and wool units via distance education using the Sakai LMS to students at all Australian Universities with agricultural science degrees via cross-institutional enrolment. UNE has negotiated with all these Universities to have these units as an accredited part of their various agricultural and economics degrees.

The Citrix-thin client system is used to provide access to a sophisticated farm systems simulation model, GrassGro3, developed by CSIRO and others, that presents a problem based learning approach, based on real local farm data, to livestock production. This approach integrates knowledge and learning across climates, soils, pastures, nutrition, livestock production and economics. Students have secure 24/7 access to various simulation programs running on a UNE server from anywhere in the world via the internet. The model is state-of-the-art.

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<sup>1</sup> Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education [http://www.une.edu.au/education/for\\_students/postgraduate/gradcertsandmasters/gcte.php](http://www.une.edu.au/education/for_students/postgraduate/gradcertsandmasters/gcte.php)

## 23. NEA and community engagement

*Submitted by Teaching and Learning Centre*

The New England Award (NEA) was introduced at the University of New England (UNE) in 2004 for on-campus students. Its primary aim was to support UNE's Graduate Attributes Policy through the promotion and recognition of extra-curricular achievement as a means by which the UNE graduate attributes may be developed. A key feature of the NEA is that it recognises community contribution and volunteer work and the valuable personal qualities that are developed in such activities. As a result UNE has forged links with our local community and with the extension of the NEA to distance students in 2008 similar linkages are being made in the communities of our students right across Australia. This has so far involved organisations such as Lifeline; Lions Clubs; Rotary, Red Cross, Salvation Army; RSPCA; Oxfam; Cancer Council; Conservation Volunteers; Camp Quality; Girl Guides Association; St John Ambulance; National Trust; local church groups, arts societies, advocacy organizations, environmental groups, the local council and the local office of the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (New England/North West).

The result has been advantageous for all involved. These organizations have a ready source of volunteers – many organisations put out calls for assistance through us to our 'pool' of volunteers who are New Award registered students. They can also be sure of the commitment of the student volunteers and know that there is both incentive for and recognition of their efforts.

The student volunteers understand that the volunteering provides opportunities to develop important life skills and that these are as important as academic goals for the 'well-rounded' student which is what we are hearing that employers of graduates want.

In return the university has more engaged and satisfied students which we know from the retention literature impacts on student success and retention. It also means that UNE has stronger, more meaningful ties with our communities.

The NEA program is open to all students and there are three levels of attainment – personal and professional growth through engagement in extra-curricular activity only; completion of 1,000 points worth of activities to qualify for the New England Certificate; and completion of 1,000 points worth of activities, a reflective journal and attainment of a Credit GPA in academic studies to qualify for the New England Award which is awarded at graduation. To date, 106 students have received the New England Award.

The concept of the NEA was innovative and ground breaking within Australia. The NEA Manager has been invited to assist three other Australian universities to establish similar programs resulting so far in the Phoenix Award at USQ and the Canberra Award at the University of Canberra.

## 24. BA Online Project

*Submitted by the School of Humanities*

The School of Humanities units - IDIG 100: Australian Indigenous Societies and Colonisation and IDIG 300/500: Analysing Indigenous Australian Policy Issues are in 2009, being offered at as level D online units. Herrington et al (2001:5-6) have developed a rubric to identify and measure a quality online unit. I have then used and adapted this so as to reflect on the quality educational and student experience south and then constructed in the IDIG 100 and IDIG 300/500 online units.

Checklist of items that can be used to assess quality of pedagogy in online units

| Items           | Description   | IDIG 100  | IDIG 300 /500   |
|-----------------|---|---|---|
| Authentic Tasks | The learning activities involve tasks that promote problem-based learning activities using ways that reflect learnt | Students engage in weekly problem based learning activities by: (a) participating in a whole of class blog set up to discuss a number of key issues/questions raised in | As the cohort is less than 50, Students engage in weekly problem based learning activities by: (a) (a) participating in a whole of class blog set up to discuss a number of key |

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|  | <p>knowledge and real-life context</p>   | <p>the weekly topics as contained in the learning material.<br/> Blog discussions then and later in the week lead into some student directed themes and issues for discussion and much opportunity to and by reference, contextual this will issues of today. (b) In addition activity, two self assigned groups of students (external only and internal and external) meet to discuss a set question using De Bono's Six Thinking Hats. The pedagogical base to this is that first year university students need to learn and then apply (by way of scaffolding) critical analysis skills to their learning. At the completion of the group activity students they then individually submit their own learning on the topic. This is then assessed.</p> | <p>issues/questions raised in the weekly topics as contained in the learning material.<br/> Blog discussions then and later in the week lead into some student directed themes and issues for discussion and much opportunity to and by reference, contextual this will issues of today.</p> <p>500 level students are provided with additional activities, learning material and issues to examine.</p>   |
| <p>Opportunities for collaboration</p> | <p>Students collaborate to create products that could not be produced individually</p> | <p>In the two self assigned groups of students (external only and internal and external) collaboration is required so as to assist enable the group to understand, identify, debate the topic by applying De Bono's Six Thinking Hats. This is achieved by the group responding to a set question. All members of the group are required to promote an environment of participation, create a collection of ideas, arguments and applications and encourage group (or be it student) centred learning . In effect, it is in the group that a student is then able to move from the lower to higher order thinking skills required and in a relatively short period of time.</p>  | <p>Students each week participating in a whole of class blog to discuss a number of key issues/questions raised in the learning material. This is important, as students themselves lead the learning and subsequently talk through many of the topic's key issues. Such collaboration in effect then creates for a community of peer supported and directed learning It is then and in such an environment that students can then test out ideas and have then developed and affirmed. Subsequently such learning could not be achieved individually.</p> <p>300 and 500 level students are encouraged to collaborate by engaging in joint discussions in the Topic Blog. This also</p> |

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|                              |   | .  | enables 500 level students to help scaffold the learning of 300 level students.   |
| Learner-centred environments | There is a focus on student learning. Teacher's role is one of coach and facilitator rather than teaching | <p>Student Centred is primary to the learning environment. This has been detailed above.</p> <p>The unit coordinator's role is to ensure that the administration of the unit is established so that it runs smoothly eg., all students have been able to self enrol in the two groups. Secondly the unit coordinator mentors the learning by ensuring that discussions are taking place and are on topic, for example, when a discussion comes to an end promoting another or by informing students about any new and additional resources that they may like to examine so as to better apprehend an issues raised.</p> | <p>Student Centred is primary to the learning environment. This has been detailed above.</p> <p>Student Centred is primary to the learning environment. This has been detailed above.</p> <p>The unit coordinator's role is to ensure that the administration of the unit is established so that it runs smoothly eg., all students have access to the Unit Material. Secondly the unit coordinator mentors the learning by ensuring that discussions are taking place and are on topic, for example, when a discussion comes to an end promoting another or by informing students about any new and additional resources that they may like to examine so as to better apprehend an issues raised.</p> |
| Engaging                     | Learning environments and tasks challenge and motivate learners   | <p>The learning material in the unit is varied and targeted at different learning styles and levels of interest/understanding. Such varied resource / include lecture podcasts, vodcasts, radio presentations, written material and interactive websites.</p> <p>The Topic Blog and two self assigned group activities has been designed so that students can explore a complex and detailed question/issue by drawing on the academic literature along with their own experience. This is important as it enables a student to then shape and articulate their ideas and arguments and under the</p>                    | <p>The learning material in the unit is varied and targeted at different learning styles and levels of interest/understanding. Such varied resource / include lecture podcasts, vodcasts, radio presentations, written material and interactive websites.</p> <p>The Unit Notes provide and in each topic covered, higher and lower order learning skills and activities. In addition they provide for extension in learning and additional resources. Much of this includes a large array of multimedia.</p> <p>500 level students are provided with additional activities, learning material</p>  |

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|                               |  | <p>guidance of De Bono's Six Thinking Hats.</p> <p>Students are then to individually e-submit their response to the given question posed to the group. This then seeks to promote individuality within a greater group environment.</p> <p>Students have access to an Online Chat site within the IDIG 100 Black Board page. This enables students to socialize and hence network with one another.</p>   | <p>and issues to examine.</p> <p>Topic Blogs enable students to and in a student-centred environment discuss and develop in an e-learning environment.</p> <p>Students have access to a Online Chat site within the IDIG 300/500 Black Board page. This enables students to socialize and hence network with one another.</p>  |
| <p>Meaningful assessments</p> | <p>Authentic and integrated assessment. Assessment is integrated with activities used to evaluate students achievement</p> | <p>See Authentic Tasks above.</p> <p>Students submit to their unit coordinator their own individual response to the same question posed to the group. Why? It addresses the problem of individuals shirking in a whole group submission. It also enables the individual to scaffold on the group learning and present a final and polished response.</p> <p>The student is to submit two individual responses at the end of their group activity. This is done before and after the mid semester break and for reasons of enabling the unit coordinator to give early feedback to students. Those students requiring additional support for example, writing and research assistance, can then be directed to the given academic support services at UNE.</p> | <p>See Authentic Tasks above.</p> <p>Students submit x2 essays. It is anticipated that they will utilize the learning and materials provided to them in the Unit Materials as well as the learning gained in the cohort's online group discussions.</p> <p>500 level students are required to select from a different pool of essay questions (and that have a longer word limit). The understanding and learning expected of the 500 level students is more demanding than that of the 300 level students.</p> <p>The first essay is due before the middle of the semester and the second, at the end. They are submitted and assessed electronically (using the e-marking program). The lecturer then provides an in-depth and detailed response for the</p> |

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|                         |   |  | student, including if required referral to UNE academic support services.  |
| Accessibility           | Resources are organized in ways that make them easily accessible and located. | All resources except for 2 textbooks are available electronically through UNE's e-Reserve, e-book collection and internet sites.   | All resources except for 2 textbooks are available electronically through UNE's e-Reserve, e-book collection and internet sites.   |
| Currency                | The age of resources to the subject are appropriate to the subject matter.    | Resources are regularly appraised by the unit coordinator to ensure that they are current and/or valid. This includes internet sites.  | Resources are regularly appraised by the unit coordinator to ensure that they are current and/or valid. This includes internet sites.  |
| Richness                | Resources reflect a rich variety of perspectives                              | Resources are purposefully selected to ensure that a variety of and at times conflicting perspectives are available for students to examine. The primary aim then being to enable students to develop skills in assessing the merit and/or strength or not, of each one. For example, when students examine Australian History Wars. | Resources are purposefully selected to ensure that a variety of and at times conflicting perspectives are available for students to examine. The primary aim then being to enable students to develop skills in assessing the merit and/or strength or not, of each one. This is especially valid when students analyze an array of government policies. |
| Purposeful use of media | Media is suitable for the purpose intended                                    | The type and selection of media used in each Topic of the Unit Notes has been carefully selected so that a limited and purposeful number and type are used. For example, reference to an e-book and vodcast in conjunction to a text book and e-Reserve reading.   | The type and selection of media used in each Topic of the Unit Notes has been carefully selected so that a limited and purposeful number and type are used. For example, reference to an e-book and vodcast in conjunction to a text book and e-Reserve reading.   |
| Inclusivity             | Materials demonstrate social cultural and gender inclusively                  | Resources seek to provide an Indigenous perspective in conjunction with other literature.  | Resources seek to provide an Indigenous perspective in conjunction with other literature.  |

Reference:

Herrington, A., Herrington, J., Oliver, R., Stoney, S and Willis, J. 2001, ' Quality Guidelines For Online Courses: The Development Of An Instrument To Audit Online Units. Accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2008 from: <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/melbourne01/pdf/papers/herringtona.pdf>

# Other Good Practice Examples

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The following good practice examples do not fit neatly within the audit themes but are nevertheless important examples of innovation and improvement.

## **25. Bachelor of Social Work**

*Submitted by the School of Health*

The first cohort of students will commence studying toward the Bachelor of Social Work in semester 1, 2009. The BSW builds on the University's strength in providing rural focused professional training in related and complementary areas (including Medicine, Nursing, Psychology, Criminology, for example), grounded in the philosophy that those who are trained in 'the bush,' stay in the bush. The BSW is a cross faculty award housed in the School of Health encompassing foundation units from the Schools of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences, Health, Humanities, and Law. New core social work theory and practice units and additional complementary units have been developed to fulfill the requirements of the Australian Association of Social Workers and to provide students with a first class educational experience.

UNE has a long standing commitment in bringing education to regional Australia both in the local northern New South Wales area and through distance education throughout the nation and internationally. Building on this success, the UNE BSW will provide a professional degree to those wishing to work in diverse fields with individuals, groups and communities to address social need and injustices through preparing students for entry into the social work profession. They will be educated to assume the role of social worker in a variety of settings, providing services at regional, national and international levels. The UNE BSW has a guiding philosophy that focuses on the ways in which isolation is experienced and is based on 4 main principles:

- a rural focused curriculum, to encourage students to understand the experience of geographic isolation and rural practice together with, and in relation to, other psychological, sociological and cultural aspects of isolation;
- innovation through blended learning (combining e-learning and face-to-face learning) based on current best practice in social work education to develop social work practitioners who are innovative and creative in their practice;
- curriculum development through ongoing engagement and dialogue from social work practitioners in the field, with students, and with consumers of social work services;
- development of a strong research-rich culture that focuses on social work academics' areas of expertise, the education of social work students in rural areas, using technology to facilitate this.

These four principles culminate in the development of a social work community of students, practitioners, academics and supervisors who are committed to rural and regional Australia and those isolated in other contexts, both within Australia and internationally.

## **26. Environmental Engineering collaboration**

*Submitted by the School of Environmental and Rural Sciences*

In terms of 'good practice' partnerships, the one that is most prominent in the Environmental Engineering discipline area is the agreement with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) to provide both for the mutual exchange of specialist units and for articulation from UNE's three-year Bachelor of Engineering Technology (BEngTech) degree to USQ's four-year Bachelor of Engineering (BE) degree. This agreement came into effect in 2008 and has principally been used at this stage for provision of specialist units into the BEngTech degree. However, it is envisaged that the agreement will be fully utilised once UNE BEngTech students seek to articulate smoothly into USQ's four-year BE or Master of Engineering Practice.

This agreement has led to ongoing collaboration with USQ in other areas and it is expected to lead to joint research projects and sharing of resources. Senior staff have had several meetings with USQ colleagues to further develop and fine-tune collaborative arrangements and initiatives. USQ staff members have also offered

to mentor UNE through the Engineers Australia (EA) Accreditation process, which is due for late April this year and their assistance in that respect will be greatly appreciated.

Other areas in which the discipline engages with industry and uses 'good practice' through informal partnerships include:

strong involvement and interaction with Local Government Councils and professional engineers in the immediate region in establishing and promoting the BEngTech through two professional industry associations: Engineers Australia and the Institute of Public Works Engineers Australia; UNE presently has an MOU with Moree Plains Shire Council and is working towards MOUs with other prominent regional councils such as Clarence Valley Council and Coffs Harbour.

Academics in the discipline area use outside professionals on an unpaid basis to assist with imparting latest knowledge and ideas to students, particularly with case studies.

## **27. Making a difference in regional communities**

*Submitted by UNE Partnerships*

For Stuart Gordon, completing the Executive Leadership program (a specialised program delivered by UNE Partnerships for the Australian General Practice Network) not only provided him with the direction to facilitate change within his Division but allowed him to consider the important issues facing the greater community in Bourke.

As CEO of the NSW Outback Division of General Practice, Stuart Gordon has largely remained in the remote region in which he grew up. He has also brought with him the skills and knowledge developed through his experience in working as a Regional Manager of (the former) ATSIIC, and General Manager of NSW Health Area Health Service. More recently he and his family returned after two years working in Africa as the CEO of the Muslim Aga Khan Health Services based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where he managed the Teaching Hospital and various Primary Health Care Centres across the country.

Stuart commented that right from the start of the program he was able to apply his new skills directly into the workplace. "Coinciding with my commencement of the UNE Partnerships program was a Board decision to undergo a major restructure of the Division. The style and content of the program provided a practical framework in which to critically examine a number of important issues such as relocation of head office functions, streamlining, outsourcing, staff termination and rebuilding the organisation" said Stuart. His first assessment project was to develop a leadership plan, which was presented and endorsed by the Board. "It's great to gain theoretical knowledge but much more beneficial when you actually 'road-test' the theory in practice. For me implementing the plan provided a much greater insight into the science of decision making and the related impacts and implications" commented Stuart.

Stuart has now completed an Advanced Diploma of Business Management, through the Executive Leadership Program, along with a Master of Public Health at the University of Sydney. For his next challenge, he is planning to enrol in the Master of Business Administration at the University of New England, but perhaps not before he also finishes building his family home on the banks of the historic Darling River in Bourke.

## **28. Developing investigation skills in RailCorp**

*Submitted by UNE Partnerships*

In late 2006, RailCorp approached UNE Partnerships to customise an investigation training program. UNE Partnerships' previous work with RailCorp was aimed at improving basic investigation skills for Level 5 investigations. The course was delivered online, providing consistent, effective training across the state. However, the purpose behind the latest course was to develop full-time safety investigators working on complex investigations.

Safety investigation for RailCorp follows many general investigation techniques, with its own subtle nuances and idiosyncrasies. According to Bruce Weston, Acting Manager Assurance and Investigations at RailCorp, the principal motivation was to improve investigations and reporting on Level 3 investigations. "A course of this type gives us the opportunity to standardise competency levels amongst investigators" he commented. "There were also other considerations such as the general professional development of our investigators. Many of them have a wealth of experience as a result of many years in their roles as safety investigators and this course will reward them with a qualification appropriate to their skills and abilities."

Customisation offers benefits over generic courses in its ability to meet the specific needs and objectives of the organisation. It embraces organisational systems and policies to ensure reinforced learning within the program. After careful consideration matching the requirements of RailCorp with an appropriate nationally accredited program, the Certificate IV in Government (Investigation) was chosen. This course incorporates the regulatory environment of the government sector with the investigation process. It also provides the flexibility to choose additional modules from the project management training package, a previously identified need.

Course material was customised by aligning it to RailCorp systems and the specific requirements of the group. This provided a more practical approach to training so new skills could be directly applied within the workplace environment. The final step involved planning a series of face-to-face sessions to further develop the knowledge and skills of the participants, build their confidence and discuss adaptations within the workplace.